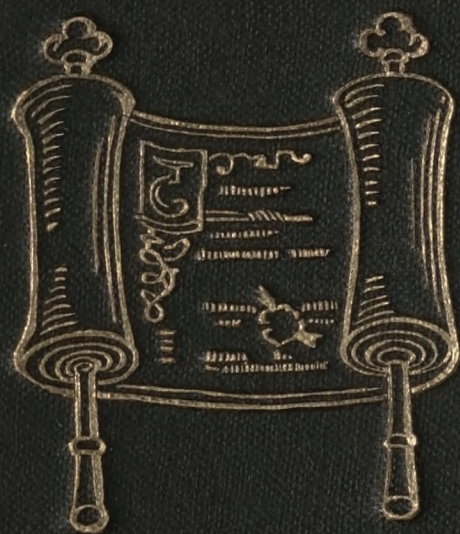


Sidelights on The Bible



Frank C. Lee



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GENERAL VIEW OF NAZARETH.

This was the residence of Jesus during his youth and young manhood, and is to-day a Christian and Moslem town of about six thousand inhabitants, on a mountain plateau. The site of the attempted precipitation of Christ (Luke 4:29) is probably the low cliff above the town.

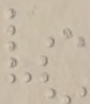
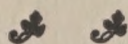
SIDELIGHTS ON THE BIBLE

BY

REVEREND FRANK T. LEE

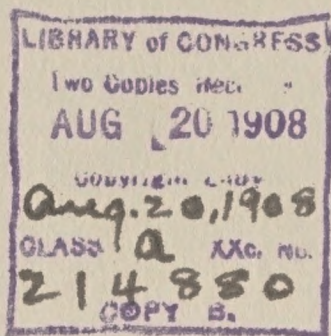
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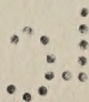


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TO MY COUSIN
MRS. MARY RUTH OSGOOD.

FOREWORD

WHILE the Bible may truly be said to be an exhaustless book, at the same time it is not impossible for the ordinary Bible student, by some well-devised and perseveringly followed plan, in a comparatively short time to gain an intelligent acquaintance with its contents — the history which it contains, its biography, its poetic and didactic sections, its spiritual teachings. The facilities for effective study of the sacred Word were never better than they are to-day. There has been great advance, during recent years, along all lines of Biblical research, the results of which are easily available. The revision of the old King James' Version, with its numerous antiquated words and expressions, has materially aided in making plain not a few obscure passages. Especially has the emphasis which has been laid upon the importance and the necessity, in order to an intelligent understanding of the Bible, of studying it historically, or in its historical settings — i. e. in the light of the particular circumstances in which its different books, even many separate passages, were written — done much to throw light upon its meaning. This is particularly

the case with the prophetic books of the Old Testament and the epistles of the New. In this way the Bible has come to be a new book to many, and a fresh interest in its study has been awakened.

In addition, however, to a direct study of the Bible, or to the instruction which is essential to a comprehensive understanding of its structure and contents, there are various sidelights upon the Scriptures which may be studied to advantage. By this means many Scriptural allusions, whose significance is not immediately obvious, are made clear. Such a knowledge, for instance, of Bible geography, as would enable one readily to locate in thought any important locality referred to, would impart an added interest and sense of reality to the sacred Word, and help to throw light upon not a few Scripture passages. The same is true with reference to the physical features of Palestine, its climate and vegetation, which do not materially change from age to age. It is instructive and helpful to one's confidence in the Scriptures, to note the perfect harmony which exists between the country as it now is, and the descriptions of it given by the sacred writers two or three thousands of years ago. Or take the manners and customs of Bible times: there is hardly a page in the sacred Word which does not allude to one or more of them. Yet these customs were mostly so different from our own in this western world, that some acquaintance with

them is essential to a clear understanding of the Scriptures. Without such knowledge, indeed, not a little in the Bible would be meaningless to us. Again, the Bible is full of figures and illustrations. Christ in particular made constant use of them, drawing them from every source. An understanding of the facts and usages upon which these illustrations are based would illumine whole classes of Scripture passages. Consider also what light has been thrown upon the historic portions of the Bible by recent discoveries in the valleys of the Nile and the Euphrates, and by the decipherment of hieroglyphic and cuneiform inscriptions which have been preserved from the remotest past. By the incidental references of the latter to Scripture persons, places, and events, many of the statements of the Bible have been confirmed, others have been supplemented, and a background of reality has been furnished for not a few of the Biblical narrations. Moreover, some knowledge of New Testament background is requisite to a full understanding of it. If, in addition to these sources of information, one has been privileged oneself to visit Bible lands, to look upon the scenes of Bible events, and to see these customs as they are still illustrated in the common life of the people, the Bible will ever after be to him a new book, from the new sense of its reality which he will thus have gained.

A few of these sidelights upon the Bible, treated

with sufficient fulness in each case to illumine the more prominent Scripture passages to which they relate, and to give to the ordinary Bible student a glimpse into the wide field of investigation to which they introduce him, are herewith presented. The aim has been to provide in brief and inexpensive form an epitome of the essential facts contained in the numerous, often elaborate treatises on these subjects. So extensive is this literature that comparatively few, even of the well-equipped libraries, contain all the standard works of this character. It is hoped that this book may not only prove interesting in itself and helpful in clearing up many otherwise obscure passages and allusions in the sacred Word, but also tend to stimulate to a broader and more intelligent study of the entire Bible.

F. T. L.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

FOREWORD	iii
CHAP. I. BIBLE GEOGRAPHY	1
1. THE OLD TESTAMENT WORLD.	
3. PALESTINE.	
4. JERUSALEM.	
CHAP. II. HARMONY OF THE LAND AND THE BOOK	33
1. PHYSICAL FEATURES OF PALESTINE — MOUNTAINS, PLAINS, SEAS.	
2. SITES OF CITIES AND TOWNS. RUINS.	
3. CLIMATE AND VEGETATION.	
4. BIBLE LANDS OUTSIDE OF PALESTINE.	
CHAP. III. MANNERS AND CUSTOMS	63
1. HOUSES.	
2. CITIES AND VILLAGES.	
3. AGRICULTURE.	
4. VINEYARDS.	
5. SHEPHERDS.	
6. DOMESTIC LIFE.	
7. DRESS.	
CHAP. IV. CHRIST'S ILLUSTRATIONS	97
1. FROM DOMESTIC, SOCIAL, CIVIL LIFE.	
2. FROM OCCUPATIONS OF THE PEOPLE.	
3. FROM NATURE.	
4. FROM RELIGIOUS OBSERVANCES.	
5. MISCELLANEOUS SOURCES.	
6. THE PARABLES,—PURPOSE, INTERPRE- TATION, ILLUSTRATIVE EXAMPLES.	

TABLE OF CONTENTS

CHAP. V.	LIGHT FROM THE MONUMENTS . .	134
	1. EGYPT AND ITS HIEROGLYPHIC RECORDS.	
	2. RUINS UNCOVERED IN MESOPOTAMIA AND BABYLONIA.	
	3. CUNEIFORM INSCRIPTIONS AND THEIR INTERPRETATION.	
	4. EXCAVATIONS IN PALESTINE AND COUNTRIES ADJACENT.	
CHAP. VI.	NEW TESTAMENT BACKGROUND . .	168
	1. THE HISTORICAL SITUATION.	
	2. POLITICAL CONDITIONS IN PALESTINE.	
	3. THE MOSAIC LAW AND INSTITUTIONS.	
	4. RELIGIOUS LIFE AND HOPES OF THE PEOPLE.	
	5. APOSTOLIC TIMES.	
CHAP. VII.	VISITING THE LANDS OF THE BIBLE	216
	1. ON THE WAY.	
	2. CROSSING THE APOSTLE'S TRACK.	
	3. IN PALESTINE, THE SCENE OF CHRIST'S LIFE AND WORK.	
	4. IN SYRIA. LEBANON MOUNTAINS, BAALBEK, DAMASCUS.	
	5. VIEW FROM MOUNT HERMON.	

SIDELIGHTS ON THE BIBLE

CHAPTER I

BIBLE GEOGRAPHY

WE all know how much a knowledge of the geography of a country helps to an intelligent understanding of the events which are transpiring within it. When reports of wars in Cuba, in the Philippines, in South Africa, in China, or between Japan and Russia in Manchuria, were accompanied by maps on which the places referred to and the position of contending forces were designated, we were greatly aided in grasping the situation and our interest was correspondingly enhanced. It is the same when we read of plague-, or famine-smitten districts in India, of massacres in Turkey or Russia, of explorations in the Dark Continent or in the frozen regions north or south, of the strategic position of the Hawaiian Islands, of the Panama Canal matters, of the wreck of an ocean steamer, or of transactions of importance in any part of the world. No matter how well informed in general one may be in regard to the geography of

any land, it is always helpful, refreshing to the memory, to be able, when there is occasion, at once to glance at a map. Newspapers recognize this and aim promptly to provide needed helps of this character. A book of travels nowadays without accompanying maps and diagrams would be regarded as unpardonably incomplete.

It is the same in our study of the events of the past. Ancient history would lose much of its charm without illustrative maps. For an intelligent study of the migration of Abraham, the wanderings in the wilderness, the conquest of Canaan, the exile and the return, the movements of our Savior, or the missionary journeys of the great apostle, maps are indispensable. Geography and history are closely connected. Each throws light upon the other. Efforts to awaken interest in the Bible, or to popularize it, whether made in the home, in the classroom, or from the pulpit, will not reach the full measure of success if they neglect the maps which modern scholarship has provided, or the photographs or other views which give such vividness to Biblical scenes and incidents. Nazareth, Bethlehem, Mount Tabor, the Sea of Galilee, the Jordan, or Jerusalem, may in this way be made as familiar to us as towns and cities in our own country. A practical lesson in Bible Geography now and then in the Sunday School or from the pulpit, would be wholesome.

The subject of Biblical geography has, within the past generation, received special attention at the hands of Christian scholars of various lands, and this has imparted a new impulse to the exploration of sacred localities. The sites of many cities in Bible countries have been clearly identified, others are in process of being determined, while others still are as yet matters of dispute or are wholly conjectural. As if the Bible itself were intended to interest us in a study of the lands in which its authors lived, allusions to its scenery, its rivers and lakes, its valleys and mountains, its towns and cities, abound on almost every page from Genesis to Revelation.

I.

THE WORLD OF THE OLD TESTAMENT embraces the seas and lands from the river of Egypt on the west, to the Persian Gulf on the east, and from the northern part of the Red Sea on the south, to the southern part of the Caspian Sea on the north. The total extent of the territory embraced was about 1,400 miles from east to west, and 900 miles from north to south, aggregating perhaps a million and a-quarter square miles. Deducting from this such bodies of water as are included in it, possibly 150,000 square miles, there is left an area about one-third the size of the United States apart from Alaska. More than one-half of this region —

that portion which is directly to the east and southeast of Palestine — is uninhabitable desert. This would leave the portion actually habitable as less than one-eighth the size of the American republic. Palestine itself, or that part of the Holy Land west of the Jordan — the main theater of Biblical history — is very small. England is nearly five times as large, Scotland and Ireland about three times. It is hardly as large as Wales, or about the size of Vermont or New Hampshire.

Turning now to some of the geographical features of this Old Testament world in detail, we notice first its *seas*. (See maps for all following references.) Some of them are large bodies of water. The Caspian Sea, which occupies the northeast corner of this world, is the largest body of water surrounded by land on the globe. Into the Persian Gulf at the southeast, two of the great rivers of Old Testament history empty their waters — the Tigris, called in the Bible Hiddekel, and the Euphrates, the great river of the Bible world, (Gen. ii:14). The Red Sea on the southwest has two arms at its north end, between which is the wilderness where the Israelites lived their nomadic life for forty years after the exodus. The Dead Sea, called in the Bible the “Salt Sea,” (Josh. xviii:19), is about 100 miles north of the eastern arm of the Red Sea. Its length is forty-seven miles and it has an average width of ten miles. In some places

it is 1,300 feet deep, although its surface is 1,300 feet lower than the Mediterranean. The southern part of the sea is an extensive lagoon not more than twenty feet deep. During the rainy season its waters may rise fifteen feet. It has no known outlet. So intensely salt is the water that it is impossible for one to sink in it. This has repeatedly been tested. One simply floats upon the surface. The little sea or lake of Galilee — once surrounded by cities, its waters covered with boats, and around whose borders much of our Lord's ministry was passed — is really an expansion of the river Jordan. It is thirteen miles in length, and about seven miles in width at its widest part. Its greatest depth is less than 200 feet. The waters of Merom, a few miles farther north, and beside which Joshua gained a decisive victory over the combined armies of the kings of the northern section of Palestine, (Josh. xi:7, 8), is also an expansion of the Jordan. It is triangular in shape, about three miles across, located in a swampy region, and is surrounded by jungles. Measurements vary somewhat with the amount of the rainfall. It lies seven feet above the level of the Mediterranean, and is from ten to sixteen feet in depth. The Mediterranean or "great sea toward the going down of the sun," (Josh. i:4), forms the western boundary of the Holy Land and the regions to the north of it. It was on this sea that Jonah is represented as hav-

ing made his memorable voyage (Jonah i:3), and that Paul was shipwrecked on his way to Rome, (Acts xxvii).

The nucleus of the *mountain system* of the Old Testament world is found in the land of Armenia, midway between the Caspian Sea and Asia Minor. Here five great mountain ranges have their origin, with only a part of which, however, are we now particularly concerned. The Ararat mountains, referred to in the story of Noah and the flood, (Gen. viii:4), run nearly east and west, in three parallel sections. One of the peaks of the most northern of the three sections is the traditional resting-place of the ark. It is 18,000 feet high, the highest summit of the group. The Lebanon range, starting from the west side of the Ararat group, runs in a southwesterly direction along the Mediterranean coast toward the Red Sea. In Syria it is divided into two parallel branches, Lebanon and Anti-Lebanon. Mount Hermon, which is 9,200 feet high and overlooks Palestine, is the southern termination of the Anti-Lebanon range. This has always been a landmark of northern Palestine. South of Palestine, this Lebanon range forms the Sinaitic group, on one of the peaks of which the Law was given, (Ex. xix:16 and ff). The other ranges are the Caspian, bending around the south end of the Caspian Sea and extending eastward; the Zagros, which forms the eastern

watershed of the Tigris and Euphrates rivers, running generally southeast to the north shore of the Persian Gulf; and the Taurus range, which runs in a westerly direction, following the north shore of the Mediterranean. As a young man Paul lived in sight of this latter range. Tarsus, his native place, is but a few miles to the southward.

Nearly all the *rivers* of the Old Testament world, especially the largest of them, have their origin in the mountain system of Armenia, and nearly all of them follow the mountain lines. The Euphrates flows west 400 miles, then south about as far, then in a southeasterly direction 1,000 miles, when it unites with the Tigris. It is navigable for 1,100 miles, and has in all ages formed the principal route of travel between eastern and western Asia. For 800 miles before it reaches Babylon, which is on its banks, it flows through a desert and does not receive a single tributary. At Babylon it is nearly a mile wide. At its annual overflow it sometimes rises twelve feet.

The Nile is the one river of Egypt. It rises in the center of the continent, its sources having been discovered through the explorations of recent years, and flows north to the Mediterranean, into which, through several mouths, it empties its waters. It was along the banks of this river that the Israelites were compelled to make bricks during their Egyptian bondage. Its waters, with their

rich deposits upon the soil from its yearly overflow, have made Egypt the fertile land that it is. Memphis, its early capital, was located on this river. The Jordan, really the only river of Palestine, is yet one of the most important mentioned in Bible history. Taking its rise in three large springs at the base of Mount Hermon, it flows southward in a zigzag course to the Dead Sea. Its current is rapid. The springs which form its source are 1,700 feet above tide water. Below Merom the river descends by a fall of 60 feet to the mile. From the Sea of Galilee, which is 682 feet below the Mediterranean, the river flows through a gorge 65 miles long to the Dead Sea, which, as has already been said, is 1,300 feet below the Mediterranean. On either side of this gorge there is a barrier of cliffs, from two to eight miles apart, except at the plain of the Jordan, just north of the Dead Sea, which is fourteen miles wide. The plain itself lies about 400 feet above the level of the Dead Sea. Around this plain are mountains, some of which rise to a height of 3,000 to 4,000 feet above it. It was in the portion of the plain east of the Jordan that the Israelites encamped before their invasion of the land of promise, and it was at Gilgal on the west of the river, that they had their headquarters during its conquest, (Josh. v:10, x:15, etc.). The direct length of the Jordan is 134 miles, but through its windings, its channel is

increased to 200 miles. In its entire progress it falls over 3,000 feet — an average of 22 feet to the mile. It varies in width from 80 to 180 feet, and in depth from three or four to twelve feet. There were never, on its banks, any great cities, yet many interesting events of Bible history are associated with it.

The Old Testament world has three *natural divisions* — somewhat like those of the United States. The eastern slope extends from Mount Zagros eastward to the desert. Here is Armenia. Media is on the west of the Caspian Sea, and Persia is south of Media. The central plain lies between the Zagros and the Lebanon. In this plain are Assyria on the north, Elam on the south. Mesopotamia and Chaldea are between the Tigris and Euphrates, the former to the north, and the latter to the south. West of the Euphrates is the desert of Arabia. The Mediterranean slope is between the Lebanon and the Mediterranean Sea. The lands of this slope, beginning with the south, are Egypt, the Wilderness, Canaan or Palestine, Syria, Phœnicia, Asia Minor.

Four *great empires* ruled in succession over most of the Old Testament world. (1) The early Chaldean Empire, with Ur for its earlier, and Babylon for its later capital. Ur is referred to in the story of Abraham, (Gen. xi:31). (2) The Assyrian Empire, with Nineveh for its capital, was

located on both sides of the Tigris. At one time its people were rulers of all the lands to the westward as far as the Mediterranean. It was to Nineveh that the prophet Jonah is represented as having been sent, whither, after seeking to evade his duty, he was finally constrained, reluctantly, to go, (Jonah i:1-3, iii:1-3). (3) The Babylonian Empire, (about B. C. 625-536), was established by Nebuchadrezzar, with Babylon as its capital. The fall of this noted city is referred to in connection with the story of Belteshazzar and the hand-writing on the wall, (Dan. v:30, 31). (4) The Persian Empire, (about 536 to 330 B. C.), was established by Cyrus, with Shushan, or Susa, for its capital, the scene of the story of Queen Esther, (Esther i:2, ii:8), and where Nehemiah was acting as cupbearer to the king when the desire seized him to go to Jerusalem and rebuild its broken walls, (Neh. i:1). Haran, (Gen. xi:31, xii:4, 5), the home for a season of Abraham after migrating from Ur of the Chaldees, was in Mesopotamia. Damascus, which is frequently referred to in connection with the wars between Israel and Syria, was the capital of Syria. Tyre was the commercial metropolis of Phœnicia. The main events of Old Testament history, outside of Palestine, cluster about the places we have now named.

II.

During the period between the close of the Old Testament canon and the Advent, the course of Empire moved westward 1,000 miles, and the capital of the world passed from Asia to Europe. Jerusalem and Rome became the eastern and western limits of the NEW TESTAMENT WORLD.

Of the *seas* mentioned in the New Testament, the Sea of Galilee and the Dead Sea have already been described. The Ægean Sea, between Asia Minor and Greece, was familiar to Paul. In this sea is the island of Patmos, (Rev. i:9), where John had the vision which formed the basis of the book of Revelation. The Adriatic Sea comprised that portion of the Mediterranean which lies between the southern extremity of Italy and Greece. The Mediterranean Sea as far west as Italy, was known to the New Testament world.

In the book of Acts we have reference to Cyprus, which Paul and Barnabas visited on their first missionary journey, (Acts xiii:4); Crete, southeast of Greece, mentioned in the account of Paul's voyage to Rome, (Acts xxvii:7, 12, 13, 21); Cauda, a little island to the south of Crete, (xxvii:16); Melita, or Malta, now the British stronghold, where the apostle was shipwrecked, (Acts xxviii:1); and Sicily, of which Syracuse, (Acts xxviii:12), visited by Paul on his way to Rome, was an important city.

The *lands* of the New Testament world belong to three continents. Libya and Egypt are in Africa, Egypt being less prominent here than in Old Testament times; Palestine, Phœnicia, Syria, and Asia Minor, belong to Asia; Thrace, Macedonia, Greece or Achaia, Illyricum, and Italy, are in Europe. Of the fourteen provinces in Asia Minor, three of them, Pontus, Paphlagonia, and Bithynia, bordered on the Black Sea. Mysia, Lydia, and Caria, on the west, bordered on the Ægean — these provinces together forming the region which is termed “Asia” in the book of Acts, (Acts vi:9, xxi:27, etc). Here the seven churches which were addressed in Revelation, (Rev. i:4), were located. Bordering on the Mediterranean were Lycia, Pamphylia, and Cilicia. In the interior were five provinces — Phrygia, Lycaonia, Pisidia, Galatia, and Cappadocia. It was to the Galatian Christians that Paul addressed one of his most vigorous epistles, (Gal. i:2).

A few of the *cities* which are prominently referred to in the New Testament, chiefly in the book of Acts, may be mentioned. Among them were Alexandria in Egypt, (Acts xviii:24); Cæsarea, the political capital of Judea, (Acts xxiii:33), on its western coast, where Paul was imprisoned for two years; Bethlehem, in the southern part of Palestine, where Christ was born, (Luke ii:4-7); Nazareth, at the north, the home of his youth and

young manhood, (Luke ii:39); and Jerusalem, with its remarkable history in the Old Testament and the New, where Christ preached, where He was finally arrested and crucified. There was Damascus, too, near which Paul was converted, (Acts ix:3), which was the southern capital of Syria, as Antioch, the scene of Paul's labors for a year, (Acts xi:25, 26), was the northern. Tarsus, in the province of Cilicia, was his birthplace, (Acts xxii:3). Ephesus, which was the scene of Paul's labors for three years, the site of the temple to the goddess Diana, and where the uproar caused by the silversmiths occurred, (Acts xix), was in Lydia. It is believed that the apostle John also labored here, and that here he died. Philippi and Thessalonica in Macedonia were visited by Paul and Silas on the second missionary journey, when the gospel was first introduced into Europe, (Acts xvi:12, xvii:1). At the former place they were scourged and imprisoned, in the second they barely escaped a similar experience. Berea, too, they visited, (Acts xvii:10). At Athens, from the Areopagus, or Mars Hill, Paul delivered his address on the Fatherhood of God and the Brotherhood of Man, (Acts xvii:16 and ff). At Corinth he founded and built up a church, (Acts xviii:1-11), to which he afterward wrote two of his most practical epistles. Rome, the proud capital of the Roman empire and mistress of the world at that time, was the scene of Paul's imprisonment

while waiting for his trial before Cæsar, (Acts xxviii:16), and from here he wrote several of his most spiritual epistles. To the Christians here he had previously addressed his notable epistle "to the Romans." Here also, it is believed, he suffered martyrdom.

The following facts may be noted as constituting a *providential preparation* for the introduction of Christianity into the world: the Roman government had extended its sway over many different lands; while many languages were spoken in the Roman empire, the Greek language was spoken everywhere; although there were many races, the Jewish race was everywhere found, and their synagogues furnished a center of missionary operations in every city; while there were many religions, there was no deep-seated conviction as to the truth of any one of them. Everywhere serious-minded people were hungering after a knowledge of the true God. These facts make it clear that the times were ripe and the conditions favorable for the introduction of Christianity — more favorable than they had been before or have been since. Together they constitute a providential preparation for the advent of Christ and the inauguration of His spiritual kingdom.

III.

As we examine the map of PALESTINE we cannot but be impressed with the smallness of the

Holy Land proper. It is but a narrow strip of country bordering on the eastern coast of the Mediterranean, hardly large enough to be noticed as compared with the regions adjacent. Yet small as it is, and isolated by the desert on the east and south, by the Mediterranean on the west, and mountains to the north, it was the theater of momentous events, and of most of the important events of Bible history. It lay between great empires — Egypt on the southwest, and Assyria and Babylonia on the east — was indeed the passageway between them. No land is so hallowed in its associations, or so abounds in sacred memories. It was mainly the scene of God's revelation to man, the land which suggested to Jewish prophets the striking imagery of their discourses, the land of the patriarchs, Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, above all, the land of the earthly life of our Lord.

The most ancient name of the Holy Land, Canaan, meaning low-land, was derived from its inhabitants who seem to have occupied the most fertile regions found in the country. After the conquest by Joshua, it was called the "Land of Israel," this name being applied to the whole territory at first, although later it had reference only to the dominion of the Ten Tribes. The name Palestine is a modernized form of the word Philistine, the name of a heathen race which occupied the southwest portion of the country. Palestine proper, the land of the

twelve tribes, embraces both Canaan and the region to the east of the Jordan. Not all of Palestine was possessed by Israel during most of its history, for the plain along this seashore was held by the Philistines on the south and the Phœnicians on the north. As popularly used now, the names "Palestine" and "Holy Land" are generally understood to refer to the portion of the country extending from the Jordan to the Mediterranean.

The country to the west of the Jordan is 143 miles in length from north to south, with an average breadth of forty miles. It has an area of about 6,500 square miles, or considerably less than Massachusetts, or about one-eighth the size of Illinois, Wisconsin, or Iowa. Including the land to the east of the Jordan, or covering the entire domain of the twelve tribes, the extent of territory would be nearly doubled, or equivalent in area to Massachusetts and Connecticut combined, or a-quarter the size of either of the western states just mentioned. The area of the entire land of promise during the reigns of Solomon and David, was only 60,000 square miles, a little less than the New England states, or a little larger than Illinois. The coast line from Gaza, the southernmost town, to Sidon on the northern boundary, is about 180 miles in length, or a little less than the distance from Boston to Albany, or from Chicago to the Mississippi river. From Sidon to the Jordan the distance is

25 miles. The Dead Sea is about 60 miles east of Gaza. The country thus varies in width from 25 to 60 miles. From the sources of the Jordan at the foot of Mount Hermon, to the south end of the Dead Sea, it is 160 miles.

Topographically, the country is divided into four sections. There is first the maritime plain which lies along the coast of the Mediterranean for the entire length of the country, broken only by Mount Carmel, north of which it is quite narrow and is called Phœnicia. South of Carmel the width of this plain varies from eight miles at the north to twenty miles at the south. The surface is undulating and the soil is very fertile. The central part of the country, the most important zone of Palestine, is mountainous throughout its whole extent, it being a continuation of the Lebanon range. The average height of the mountains in upper Galilee is 2,800 feet, although there are some which are higher. The hill country of Judea is from 2,000 to 3,000 feet above the sea level. Between the mountainous part and the plain at the west, there are foothills which are from 300 to 500 feet high, forming a kind of irregular terrace. The Negeb or South country begins just south of Hebron and slopes southward to the Arabian desert. The valley of the Jordan is a remarkable depression growing gradually deeper to the southward. It really extends, like an immense canal, from the

foot of Mount Hermon to the eastern arm of the Red Sea. To the east of the Jordan valley is a lofty table-land, which stretches away to the desert. Much of it is fertile and adapted to pasturage, a fact which, in the allotment of the land, determined the choice of those tribes which had flocks. The northern part of this territory was known as Bashan, the central as Gilead, the southern as Moab.

Small as it is, *the Jordan* is the one river of the country. There are a number of mountain brooks and torrents which are large and rapid during the rainy season, although their beds are dry most of the year. The brook Kishon, "that ancient river," (Judges v:21), flows along the foot of Carmel into the Mediterranean. At certain times of the year it is possible to ride on horseback in its bed. The river Leontes, now the Litany, forms the northern boundary of Palestine, the brook Besor the southern. Both these streams empty into the Mediterranean. From the central mountain region, the Farah — the "waters of Ænon," (John iii:23) — flows east and empties into the Jordan. The brook Kidron, (John xviii:1), flows past Jerusalem, then turns eastward and empties into the Dead Sea. On the east of the Jordan valley there are two or three rivers. The river Jabbok, (Gen. xxxii:22) descends from the table-land and enters

the Jordan a little south of a point about half the distance from the Sea of Galilee to the Dead Sea. The brook Cherith, (I Kings xvii:3), by tradition the place where Elijah was fed by the ravens, probably flows into the Jordan also, from the east. The river Arnon, (Deut. ii:24) flows into the Dead Sea about the middle of its eastern shore.

The summit of Mount Hermon, (Psa. cxxxiii:3) on the northern boundary of the country, is often, even in summer, more or less covered with snow. Mount Tabor, oval-shaped, is a little west of the Sea of Galilee, (Ps. lxxxix:12). Little Tabor, called in the Bible the "hill of Moreh," where Gideon was victorious over the Midianites, (Judges vii), is south of Tabor. At Mount Gilboa, still farther south, Saul and Jonathan lost their lives, (I Sam. xxxi:1-6). Mount Carmel, at the eastern end of which Elijah's contest with the priests of Baal took place, (I Kings xviii:20 and ff), is due west of the Sea of Galilee, and projects into the Mediterranean. Mounts Ebal and Gerizim are near the center of the country. In the narrow valley between them, the Israelites, led by Joshua, assembled to hear the blessings and the cursings read, (Joshua viii:30-35), in accordance with the direction of Moses before his death. The Mount of Olives is just east of Jerusalem. From it Jesus ascended, (Acts i:9-12). Mount Nebo, where

Moses died, and whence he had seen the promised land, (Deut. xxxiv), is a little to the eastward of the Jordan near the head of the Dead Sea.

Among the *places* in the Holy Land which are particularly associated with Bible incidents are the following: Gaza, the scene of Samson's exploits and of his death, (Judges xvi:21 and ff), on the coast at the south; Joppa, the seaport of Jerusalem, from which Jonah set sail, (Jonah i:3), and where Peter had a notable vision, (Acts x:1-16); farther north, also on the coast, Cæsarea, at the time of Christ the political capital of Judea, and the scene of Paul's imprisonment for two years, (Acts xxiii:33). Tyre, which Christ visited, and Sidon, (Matt. xv:21), are on the coast still farther north. Hebron, in the southern central part of Palestine, was the burial place of the patriarchs, (Gen. xxiii:17-20, xxv:8-10, l:12-14). Bethlehem, a few miles south of Jerusalem, was the birthplace of David, (I Sam. xvi:1, 19, 20), and later of David's greater Son, (Luke ii:4-7). Jerusalem was the center of interest during most of the Old Testament history and all of the New. Bethel, the scene of Jacob's vision of the ladder reaching to heaven and of angels ascending and descending upon it, (Gen. xxviii:10-19), was nine or ten miles north of Jerusalem. Shechem, (Gen. xxxvii:12, 13, etc.), near which Jacob's well was located, lies between Mounts Ebal and Gerizim. Samaria, capital of

the northern Kingdom, (I Kings xvi:23, 24) was on a hill a few miles northwest of Shechem. Nazareth, the early home of Jesus, (Luke ii:51), was on a hillside in Galilee and on the northern border of the plain of Esdraelon. Capernaum was on the west coast of the Sea of Galilee, (Matt. iv:13). Dan was at one of the sources of the Jordan, (Gen. xiv:14). The towns of the eastern table-land were few and unimportant.

The *roads* of the country furnish an extremely interesting study. There are many natural highways which have followed pretty much the same direction in all ages. These have been determined by the natural conformations of the country — the valleys, passes through the mountains, fords of rivers — and by commercial traffic and military necessities. These roads are not like our highways — broad, fenced, kept in repair, and fitted for all kinds of vehicles — but simply paths through the country, which have been worn by countless multitudes of travelers, traffickers, and armies. These old roadways, famous in their day, can still be traced by current lines of traffic, which, however, are not as extensive now as of old; by great khans or caravansaries, some of them still in use though most of them are in ruins — great walled inclosures where caravans pass the night; or by the remains of old Roman pavements — for the Romans were always road-makers, and all over their ancient do-

minions traces of them are still to be found, even in England and in the Orient. Of course there were roads connecting Egypt and Assyria. Two roads ran through the plain along the Mediterranean coast, over which embassies and armies from two continents traveled centuries ago. Roads branched off here and there, according as there were passes in the mountains. Jerusalem was a center whence roads ran to different parts of the land. One starts northward from the Damascus gate and passing through the center of the mountain region toward Shechem and Dan, terminates at Damascus. Historic localities abound all along the course of this road. It was over it that Jesus and His disciples were passing when they came to Jacob's well, where He rested and had the conversation with the woman of Samaria concerning the water of life.

Another road led to the eastward or northeastward from the Holy City. It passed through a barren region of crags and ravines which is still almost without inhabitants, except the robbers who have haunted it since the days when "a certain man was going down from Jerusalem to Jericho," and "fell among robbers," (Luke x:30). Bethany, on the eastern slope of Olivet, was and is the only town along its course until it reached Jericho, (Luke xix:29). The road which runs southward from Jerusalem passes by Bethlehem. Its course is along the crest of the hill country toward Hebron

and Beersheba. Another road ran to the southwestward toward Gaza. It was on this road that Philip had his interview with the eunuch who was returning from Jerusalem to Ethiopia, (Acts viii: 26 and ff). There was a road also which ran northwest to Joppa, descending from the mountains to the sea.

Jericho was another central point for roads. One ran northwest up to Ai and beyond, another southwest to Bethlehem, another east across the Jordan, thence branching both north and south. Roads from Egypt branched off as they came to Carmel — one running to the westward around the promontory, close to the sea, continuing north along the coast, another passing through Megiddo into the plain of Esdraelon, another turning to the eastward and passing through the valley of Dothan. Probably the Ismaelitish merchants who bought Joseph from his brethren, traveled over this latter road on their way to Egypt. Galilee was covered with roads. One ran from Tyre and Sidon off to the eastward into the regions of Bashan. This was an outlet from the interior to the sea. South of the sea of Galilee there was a bridge over the Jordan. Bethshean was a distributing point, so also was Damascus. Now there are railroads from Joppa to Jerusalem, from Haifa to Tiberias, and from Beirut to Damascus.

During the *tribal period*, which continued from

the conquest of the land by Joshua to the inauguration of the kingdom, the country was occupied by what we may call four groups of settlers. East of the Jordan were Reuben, Gad, and Manasseh (east). Judea was the center of the southern group, Simeon on the south and Benjamin and Dan on the north. In the central group were Ephraim, Manasseh (west,) both extending from the Jordan to the Mediterranean. The northern group consisted of Issachar on the south, Zebulon in the center, Asher on the northwest, and Naphtali on the northeast, (Josh. xiii and ff).

After the tribal period, the tribes were united in a kingdom, and so remained during the reigns of Saul, David, and Solomon. After the death of Solomon the country was divided into two kingdoms, (I Kings xii). Judah, Simeon and Benjamin forming the Kingdom of Judah, with Jerusalem for its capital, and the rest of the tribes forming a northern kingdom, or Kingdom of Israel, with Samaria for its capital. In the New Testament age, or the provincial period, the country was divided into the following provinces: west of the Jordan, Galilee at the north, Samaria in the center, Judea at the south. East of the Sea of Galilee was the tetrachy of Philip, known as Bashan in early history. East of the Jordan — south of the Hieromax River — was Perea. This was united with Galilee under Herod Antipas.

The earliest people of this remarkable little country were an unknown race, like the mound-builders in America, and the cave-dwellers in Europe. At the time of Abraham's migration from Mesopotamia to Palestine, these earlier races had been largely supplanted by later tribes which were often called Canaanites, and which were variously distributed throughout the country. There were first the Zidonians on the narrow plain by the Mediterranean, who were early famous as traders in the Mediterranean world, and whose country was never possessed by the Israelites. Secondly there were the Canaanites proper, or lowlanders, who occupied the maritime plain from Phœnicia southward, including also the plain of Esdraelon and the Jordan valley, the richest and most valuable portion of the land. In the patriarchal age their only city on the coast was Joppa. They had a number of cities in the Jordan valley, including Sodom and Gomorrah which were destroyed, (Gen. xix:24, 25). Just before the conquest their most important city was Jericho which had arisen in place of the cities which had been destroyed. Then there were the Philistines, south of the Canaanites. They had frequent dealings with Abraham and Isaac. Before the conquest there was a powerful confederacy of five cities. The Philistines were not subdued by the Israelites until the time of David. All through the period of the Judges they were the

most dangerous of Israel's enemies. Other tribes of this same Canaanitish stock were the Girgashites, the Hivites, the Perizzites, the Amorites, and the Jebusites. The latter were a small warlike tribe living on the mountains around the city Jebus. The city was held by them long after the conquest by Joshua. The Hivites dwelt in Mount Lebanon, with other tribes of which little is known farther north. There were several tribes on the south, not all of which can be located with certainty. The Amalekites, a people of unknown origin and predatory in their habits, dwelt south of the Philistines. There were the Kenites also, to the south of Judah, and the Edomites, descended from Esau, to the southwest of the Dead Sea. The country to the southeast and east of the Dead Sea was occupied by the Moabites and Ammonites, descendants of Lot, the nephew of Abraham.

All these races probably spoke the Hebrew tongue, or one closely allied to it. Each village or tribe had its own ruler called king, whose authority, however, was limited by a body of elders. The religion of these tribes differed widely from that of the Hebrews. The Canaanites deified nature under various forms, especially that of Baal, the giver of life, and of Ashtoreth, the corresponding female divinity. Their rites and worship were impure and cruel. The history of these peoples is unwritten save as they were related to the Conquest.

IV.

Because of its Biblical associations; because of its place and power in history; because the closing scenes in the life of our Lord were enacted here, there is no city on earth which the devout Christian would rather visit than JERUSALEM. In the thought of most people, a kind of halo surrounds it. Certain it is that were we to take out of the Bible all the passages which relate to Jerusalem, the sacred volume would seem to be, and would be, somewhat fragmentary.

The city has had a very remarkable *history*. At the time of Joshua's conquest it was in possession of a tribe of Canaanites, called Jebusites, whom the Israelites could not drive out. They continued indeed, to hold the city through the period of the Judges, through the reign of Saul until the eighth year of David's reign. when it was captured, and made the capital of his kingdom, (II Sam. v:6-9). During all these years it had been impossible to dislodge these Jebusites, although their city was in the very heart of the country. This shows how strong a fortress it was, and its fitness to be a capital. Under Solomon, David's successor, the city was greatly enriched and beautified, the most notable structure which he erected being the Temple, the great national sanctuary, (I Kings vi).

From Solomon's time, the history of the city was

varied for centuries. It was taken and retaken, destroyed and rebuilt. At one time the Egyptians from the southwest subdued it, and later Nebuchadnezzar from the east did the same. In the third century B. C., it opened its gates to Alexander the Great. Later still, it came under the Roman power and remained so through the time of Christ. It was destroyed, with a great slaughter of Jews, by Titus, in the year 70 A. D. Afterward it was rebuilt, and then for centuries it was captured and recaptured, finally coming under the power of the Mohammedans. Then came the era of Crusades, when multitudes of the zealous from all over Europe sought to capture it. They did so finally, and held it for a number of years. At length it came under the dominion of the Turks, and has remained so for several centuries. Probably Jerusalem has been captured and recaptured, leveled and rebuilt, more times than any other city in the world. Under the circumstances, it is not strange that a great deal of debris should have accumulated in and about it. In this way depressions have been filled up, and the valleys between the hills on which it was built have nearly disappeared. It is said that the present streets of the city are 30 to 50 feet higher than those of Christ's day.

The general elevation of the city is about 2,500 feet above the sea. It is 32 miles from the Mediterranean, 18 miles from the Dead Sea, 36 from

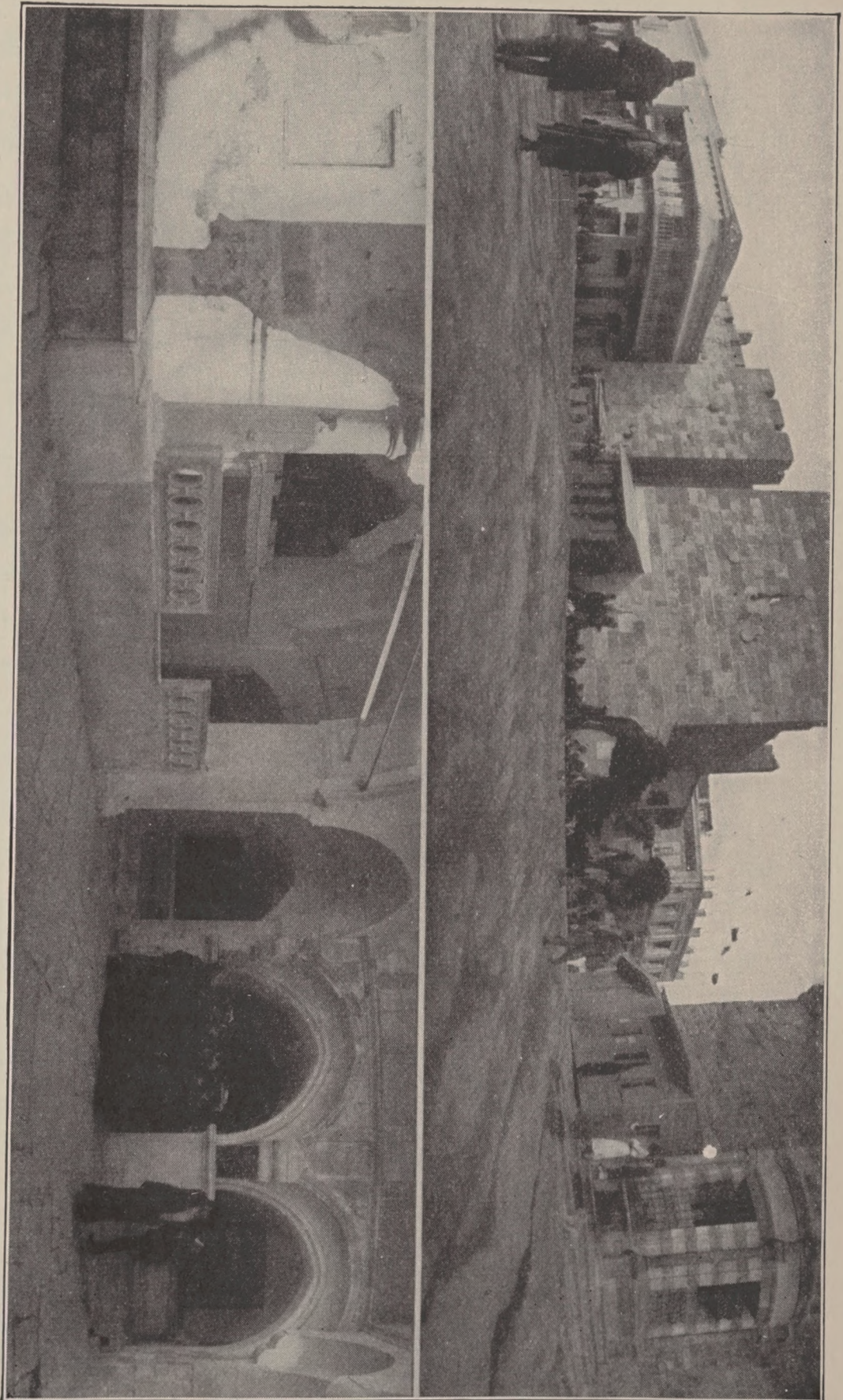
Samaria, and 20 from Hebron. Owing to its topography, the present outlines of the city, though not precisely the same, probably do not differ greatly from those of earlier times. It is at present surrounded by a wall, built 350 years ago, which is 38 feet high, nine feet in thickness at the base, and three feet thick at the parapet. There are thirty-four towers at intervals. The Temple Enclosure, as it is called, on the east side, is a quadrangle containing about 35 acres. Here no doubt was the site of the Temple. Now a large Mohammedan mosque, octagonal in form, and surmounted by an immense black dome, occupies the center of the quadrangle. This is the most conspicuous object in the city, especially as one views it from the top of Mount Olivet across the Kidron at the east. The eastern wall of the city is undoubtedly about the same in location as the one of old. It is just on the edge of the valley of Jehoshaphat, through which runs the brook Kidron. The western wall cannot be far removed from the site of the original one. It is generally believed that the Tower of David at the Joppa gate is in the same position as in David's time, if it is not the very same tower. On the south, the hill of Zion, perhaps the site of the original city in the time of the Jebusites, is now partly outside the southern wall. The position of the wall on the north has been changed several times.

Originally the city was built on four hills, or

elevations. These hills were: Zion, the largest and highest, at the southwest; Acra, almost north of Zion, and like that, between the Hinnom and Tyropean valleys; Moriah, the seat of the Temple, the southeast hill, between the Kidron and Tyropean valleys. At the southern end of Moriah is a steep declivity called Ophel, extending to a junction of the valleys. Bezetha, north of Moriah, is between the same valleys.

Outside the city, we have at the east the Mount of Olives, a range of five peaks or crowns extending north and south, just beyond the valley of the Kidron, and but little higher than Jerusalem itself. The middle peak is called the Hill of the Ascension. From its summit the finest view of the city is to be gained. To the south of the city, across the valley of Hinnom, is the Hill of Evil Counsel, so named as the traditional place of Judas' bargain with the chief priests for the delivery of Christ into their hands, and of the "field of blood." At present a Moslem cemetery occupies a goodly proportion of the space outside the walls over against Olivet.

The present city has seven gates, although only four of them are in use. The Jaffa gate, through which most travelers enter the city, is on the west, the Damascus gate on the north, that of St. Stephen on the east, and Zion gate is at the south. The population is made up of Jews, Mohammedans, Armenians, and Christians. The city is divided



Permission of Robt. U. Jacob.

JERUSALEM.

I. Inside the Jaffa gate. II. In the palace of Caiaphas.

into four sections by two somewhat irregular but important streets which cross each other at right angles — David street, running eastward from the Jaffa gate, and Damascus street running southward from the gate of that name. The Jews occupy the southeast quarter, the Mohammedans the northeast, the Armenians the southwest, and Christians the northwest. The Mohammedan quarter is the cleanest, that of the Jews the foulest, that of the Christians a mean between the two. The streets, all of them, are mere lanes, and filthy beyond description. Many of them are roughly paved. The houses are low, and for the most part better fitted to be stables than human habitations. The stores and shops, as a rule, are as unattractive as the streets. The church of the Holy Sepulcher is the center of interest from the many sacred places which have been grouped together within its walls, including the place of the crucifixion and the sepulcher in which Christ was buried. There is little reason for accepting the traditions in regard to any one of them.

Recently a new and more modern Jerusalem has been growing up outside the walls of the old city at the west and north. It includes many hospitals, hospices, school buildings, hotels, churches, and a better class of residences than is to be found in the older city. The representatives of the various religions, Greek, Latin, and Protestant, have vied

with each other in erecting costly and showy structures. The Russians are perhaps the most prominent builders.

There are many things in and about Jerusalem to awaken interest. True, one may not feel sure about many of the locations which are pointed out, but we certainly are warranted in believing that this was the site of the Jerusalem of the Bible. The topography confirms it. It is seen to be naturally fitted to be a stronghold. It is "beautiful in elevation" as the Psalmist declares, (Ps. xlviii: 2).

Even from the cursory review of the geography of the Bible world, and of Palestine in particular, which has now been presented, one can see how effective a sidelight upon the Bible a knowledge of it is. After such a study, and with maps before one to refresh the memory, one is prepared to read the Scriptures with an interest and an understanding which he has never before had.

CHAPTER II

HARMONY OF THE LAND AND THE BOOK

AS anciently all roads, even from the remotest bounds of the Roman Empire, led toward the capital on the Tiber, centering at the golden milestone in the Forum, so from every quarter lines of confirmatory testimony converge to establish the authentic and historic character of the Bible. While no one of these lines of proof alone, may be entirely satisfactory to every person, taken together, like the many strands of a cable, they form a mass of evidence so strong and cumulative as to produce in any unprejudiced mind, an irresistible conviction of the fidelity of the sacred writers to the truth.

Among these varied confirmations, few are stronger or more conclusive than those furnished by a comparison of the Land with the Book. Modern discoveries have shown that the topographical features of the country correspond minutely with the references and descriptions found in the Bible. Nor should it surprise us that the discovery of long lost historic sites in Palestine should do no less for the literature of that country than similar discover-

ies have done for the literature of Italy and Greece. A mighty eruption of Vesuvius buried Pompeii in the first century of our era. A record of the fact was made, but afterward the site of the city was lost or forgotten and so remained for hundreds of years. "Yesterday," says a writer, "strong arms went out with spade and pick; to-day the streets of Pompeii, its forum, suburbs, baths, dwellings, and theaters, its people and their customs, are all before our gaze. Classic art, long-buried, is sifted out of her ashy grave, and steps forth from her winding-sheet of fire. So, too, the Forum of ancient Rome, the palace of the Cæsars, the Punic and other edifices of Africa, are dug up and compelled to speak out in attestation of the veracity of those who penned their annals."

Yet, striking as are these confirmations in ancient writers in profane history, they bear no comparison with those everywhere to be met with in Bible countries. No one who visits them can fail to be impressed by the constant agreement between the Land and the Book. The one is the complement of the other. In this fact one of the principal charms of travel in Bible lands is to be found. Traces of the chosen people are everywhere to be seen.

One would naturally expect the various writers of the Bible to make frequent references to the *physical features* of the country or countries wherein

the transactions which they record took place. One would expect to find allusions here and there to the rivers and lakes, to the mountains and plains of the land, and to the mode of life and habits of the people. This expectation is realized. Sometimes there are detailed descriptions of places, while in the prophecy and poetry of the Bible there is a rich and suggestive imagery which has its groundwork largely in the physical features of the land. "There is one document in the Old Testament Scripture in particular," says Dean Stanley, (*Sinai and Palestine*, p. 11), "to which there is probably no parallel in the topographical records of any country. In the book of Joshua we have what may be termed the Doomsday Book of the Conquest of Canaan. Ten chapters (xiii-xxii) are devoted to a description of the country. Not only are its general features and boundaries laid down, but the names and situations of its towns and villages are enumerated with a precision of geographical terms which invites and compels a minute investigation."

Now inasmuch as the general physical features of a country are not likely very materially to change through the ages, such allusions as these, written, as they were, centuries ago, may in large measure be verified or disproved by a study of the country itself. There has been a vast deal of such examination and study, especially during the past generation or two. Almost every square mile of the ter-

ritory has been accurately surveyed; ruins of cities of the Bible times have repeatedly been discovered and identified; while archæological proofs in regard to the ancient condition of the country and the people have been constantly multiplying. In these ways a correspondence has been discovered between the Land and the Book which has been most striking, and the general fidelity of the sacred writers to the circumstances of time and place established beyond a question. All the mountains and valleys and plains, all the rivers and lakes of the Bible have been correctly located. The correspondence between the site and its description has been found to be perfect. This is the more surprising when we remember how numerous are the authors of the Bible, and that centuries are covered by their writings. This cannot be said of any other of the historical writings of the past. Most, if not all of them, are notoriously inaccurate. But the researches of modern antiquarians have all tended to confirm and illustrate the local allusions and historical statements of the Bible.

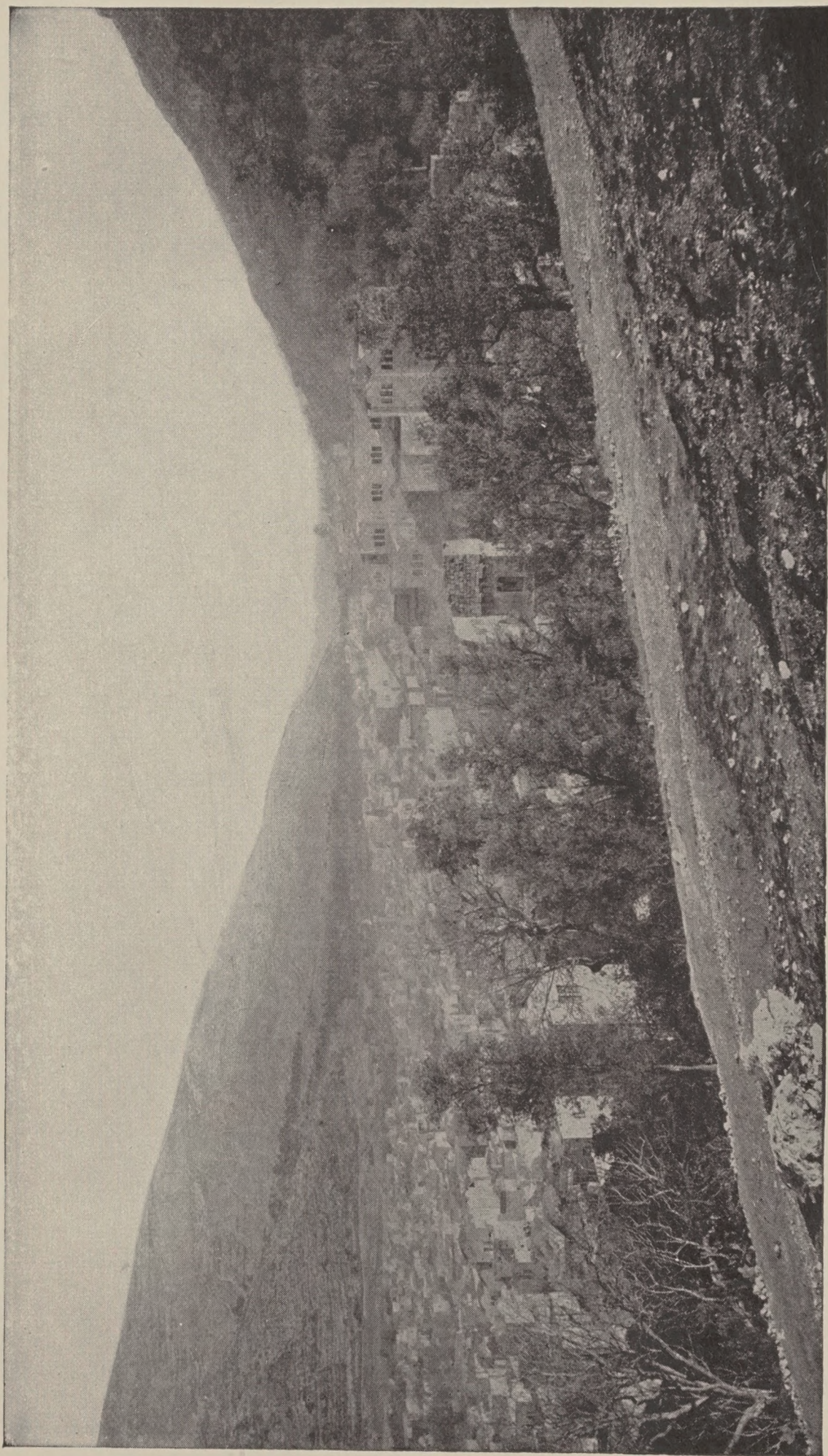
It cannot fail to strengthen our confidence in the fidelity of the sacred writers to the truth, to call attention to some of these correspondences in particular.

For several miles inland from the Mediterranean, along the entire western coast of the country, the

land is low and level, save where the bold ridge of Carmel crosses it and projects into the sea. All the central part of Palestine, throughout its entire length, is hilly and mountainous, except where it is cut asunder by the plain of Esdraelon. On the east side there is a rapid descent to the valley of the Jordan. At the south the country gradually slopes off toward the desert region. In these facts the accuracy of many expressions in Scripture in regard to "going up" and "going down" is established. As one journeys from Jaffa on the coast, to Jerusalem, which is 2,500 feet above the sea level, the road is all the way upward, as every road, indeed, toward the Holy City, is, save that from Bethlehem. "Behold, we go up to Jerusalem," (Matt. xx:18). "It is too much for you to go up to Jerusalem," (I Kings xii:28). "I (Paul) went up to Jerusalem," (Gal. i:18). The traveler in the parable of the Good Samaritan, (Luke x:30), "went down," or "was going down" from Jerusalem to Jericho. Jericho was located in the plain of the Jordan which is some 3,500 feet below Jerusalem. The descent of the hilly and barren road which leads from Jerusalem to it is very marked. This road anciently was robber-haunted, as the parable referred to indicates, and it is no less so to-day. Guards are necessary at the present time for the protection of those who use it.

From the beginning to the end of the Bible, the invariable expressions for a journey between Egypt and Canaan are:—"down into Egypt," and "up out of Egypt." "Abram went down into Egypt," (Gen. xii:10). "My people went down at the first into Egypt," (Isa. lii:4). The topographical features of the two countries confirm these expressions. Joshua's army "went up" against Ai, (map), i. e. from the Jericho plain to the mountainous region a few miles to the northwest, where Ai was located, (Josh. vii:4). Samson "went down" among the Philistines, i. e. into the low country adjoining the seashore which the Philistines occupied, (Judges xiv:1). Jacob was commanded to "go up" from the plain near Shechem to Bethel, (Gen. xxxv:1). The high priest Ananias "came down" from Jerusalem to Cæsarea on the coast, with certain elders, to inform against Paul, (Acts xxiv:1). Never have the Bible writers been found to be at fault in a single instance in the many references of this character which it contains. This would seem to give evidence of their thorough and personal familiarity with the localities to which they allude.

All the allusions to the *mountains* of the Bible are found to be accurate. There is Mount Tabor, beautiful, oval-shaped, which rises from the plain of Esdraelon at the north, bearing its silent witness to the correctness of the Scripture which locates it here. It was from the summit of Tabor that De-



THE VALE OF SHECHEM FROM THE WEST.

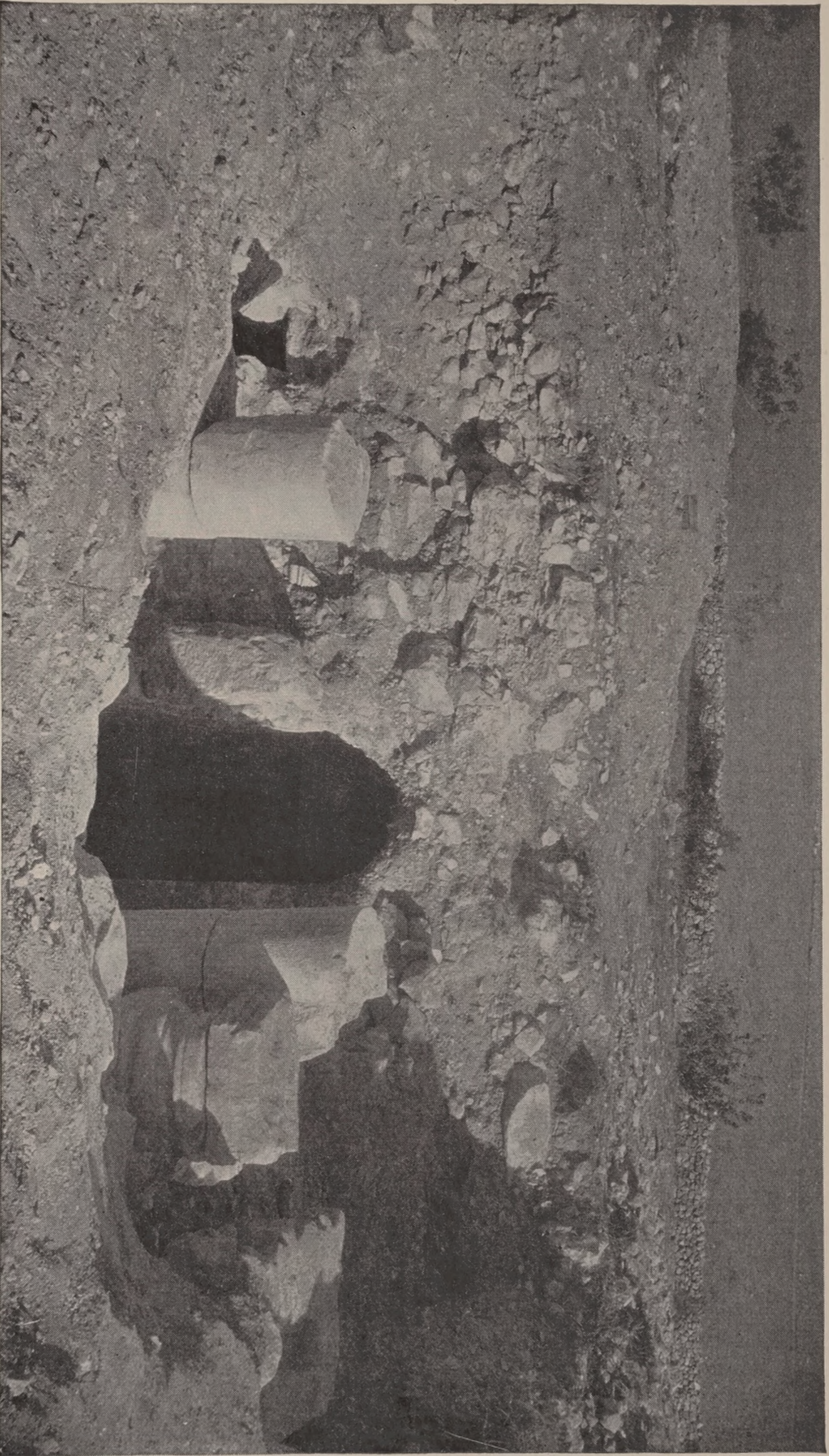
On the right, Mount Gerizim; on the left, Mount Ebal.

borah and Barak looked down upon the hosts of the Canaanites which were marshaling in the plain, (Judges iv:4-9, 12-16). Mount Carmel bounds this plain for about fourteen miles at the southwest, presenting an abrupt side to the beholder from the north or east. It terminates in a bold promontory which projects into the Mediterranean. It was upon Carmel that Elijah had his memorable contest with the priests of Baal, (I Kings xviii:20 and ff), and a plateau near the eastern extremity, somewhat lower than the rest of the mountain, and to which roads ascend from various directions, seems perfectly to correspond with the requirements of the narrative, even to the possibility of Ahab's chariot ascending to it. Elijah afterward went up from here to the top of Carmel to pray, (I Kings xviii:42), and from this place of prayer he sent his servant seven times to look out over the sea for signs of rain. The river Kishon, into which the bodies of the slain priests were thrown, and which were soon washed away no doubt by the rising current after the rain, flows along the north base of the mountains to the sea, (I Kings xviii:40). The bed of this river is now dry in the summer season. It was across the Esdraelon plain that Jezreel — where Ahab had a palace — was located, to which the king was bidden by the prophet to drive before the rain set in, Elijah himself girding up his loins and running on before the chariot, (I Kings xviii:46).

To one who has visited the mountain, everything seems perfectly to correspond with the description here given.

It was to mounts Ebal and Gerizim, in the very heart of the country, that Joshua and his hosts, soon after their occupancy of the land, made their way in accordance with the directions of Moses before his death, to listen to the reading of the blessings and the cursings out of the law, (Josh. viii:33-35). The representation is that the two mountains are near to each other and that the people assembled in the valley between them. Thus we find them, bare and rocky, Ebal to the north, and Gerizim to the south, separated by a narrow valley running east and west. The question has been raised whether the human voice could be distinctly heard by the assembled multitude. The truth of the Scripture representation has frequently been verified by actual experiment, showing that from a point in the center of the valley where the altar probably was and where the reading was done, a speaker with strong voice and distinct enunciation, is easily heard by those on either side up to the foot of the mountains. In the clear elastic air of Palestine, the transmission of sound is remarkable.

A short distance to the eastward from the long and narrow city of Shechem, which occupies a portion of this valley, Jacob's well is located. This has been identified with an almost assured cer-



THE ENTRANCE TO JACOB'S WELL.

The mouth of the well is inside the entrance.

tainty. No one, indeed, disputes its genuineness. It was here that the Savior and His disciples halted for their noonday rest and lunch, on their journey from Judea to Galilee, and here occurred the conversation with the woman of Samaria as recorded in the fourth chapter of John's gospel. In the course of that conversation she said, "Our fathers worshiped in this mountain," (John iv:20), and sure enough Gerizim rises near at hand, on whose summit there was anciently a Samaritan temple. Among the ruins of a structure of more recent date, some of the foundation stones of a very ancient temple — very likely the place of worship here referred to — are pointed out. To one who reads the narrative on the spot, the surroundings seem natural and perfectly to fit the situation.

The same may be said of other mountains and hills of the Holy Land. There is Mount Hermon to the north, with its snow-crowned summit, overlooking the country. There is Mount Olivet, too, just east of Jerusalem, to which Jesus often repaired, from which, as He came up from Jericho on His last journey — beholding Jerusalem, He wept over it, (Luke xix:41). From its summit He ascended, (Luke xxiv:51). Mountains (or hills) are "round about Jerusalem" as the Psalmist declares, (Ps. cxxv:2). Cities were usually located upon hilltops, as they are to-day.

The number of panoramic *views* which present

themselves to the traveler in Palestine is remarkable. Such views are frequently alluded to in Bible history. To one standing on Mount Ebal in Samaria, the southern heights around Jerusalem are visible, and northward there is a clear view of Hermon. One gains a grand view from Tabor, which overlooks the plain of Esdraelon, and one of surpassing interest from Carmel. Hermon has been seen from the plain of the Jordan; one writer says it is visible on a clear day from the southern end of the Dead Sea. The view from the summit of Mount Hermon over the country both to the west and to the east of the Jordan is magnificent. Even apart from the associations of the land included in this view, it has been pronounced one of the finest views which the world affords. One view referred to in the Bible might well stagger our confidence, were not the possibility of it illustrated by what may be seen in the country to-day. It is stated that from Nebo, the top of Pisgah, Moses overlooked the whole country from its southernmost limit, to Dan at the foot of Hermon on the north, with its whole width to the sea, and that portion of the region to the northeast which the two and a half tribes occupied, (Deut. xxxiv:1-4). Yet incredible as this may seem, views of corresponding extent have been gained in recent years from some of the heights of Pisgah. The precise point of Moses' outlook over the land has not as yet been certainly

identified. The atmosphere in Palestine is wonderfully clear, for which reason distant objects seem very near. The Scripture references to distance are in keeping with this unusual clearness of the air. Abraham saw Moriah "afar off," (Gen. xxii:4). The prodigal son, in the parable, was seen "afar off," (Luke xv:20), while Christ in His temptation had a vision of the kingdoms of the world, (Matt. iv:8).

The same fidelity to the facts of the country appears in the Scripture references to the *valleys and plains* of Palestine. The plain of Moab to the east of the Jordan is the only place where such a host as that of Israel could rendezvous advantageously for the invasion of the land of promise from that quarter. The plain of the Jordan, or the Jericho plain, to the west of the river, afforded a corresponding opportunity for concentration after crossing it. To the east of Bethlehem is the little plain where, probably, Ruth gleaned, (Ruth i:19, ii:3-6), and, later, the shepherds were "keeping watch by night over their flock," (Luke ii:8). A little plain about a mile in width bordering on the west shore of the Sea of Galilee for two and a-half miles, corresponds precisely in location with the plain of Genesaret which is mentioned in the Gospels, (Matt. xiv:34, Mark vi:53). The plain of Esdraelon, extending from the Mediterranean Sea to the Jordan, cutting the mountainous interior of

the country into two sections, has long been the gathering place of armies, not only in Bible times, but since. The maritime plain along the Mediterranean coast embraces the land of the Philistines to the south, and the plain of Sharon to the north of this and extending as far as Carmel. A little farther north we come to the region of Tyre and Sidon, which is but an extension of the plain already described. The armies of Egypt at the southwest, and of the empires to the northeast and eastward, marched over this plain rather than attempt a passage through the mountainous regions of the interior. It may have been the ripening fields of grain on the little plain just east of Shechem which suggested the Savior's remark as He talked with the woman at Jacob's well, "Look on the fields, that they are white already unto harvest," (John iv:35).

Another plain which, though small, is exceedingly interesting from its associations, is that of Dothan. Here it was that Joseph was sold by his brethren to a company of Ishmaelites on their way to Egypt. A caravan route from Damascus to Egypt passed through this plain. It is a fertile valley of just the character to attract a company of shepherds like Joseph's brethren, in search of good pasturage. It is about five miles long, and from one to one and a-half miles wide. Even now visiting travelers frequently see camel trains making their slow and

majestic way along the caravan route toward Egypt, perhaps pausing for water from the wells which are here, and which give the plain its name. Everything corresponds with the scene of Joseph's sale as given us in Genesis, (Gen. xxxvii:17, 28).

Many are the Scripture references to the *Sea of Galilee*, in the vicinity of which our Lord's public life was mostly spent. On its shores stood Capernaum, "his own city," (Matt. ix:1). Here the Savior called His first disciples from their occupation as fishermen to make them fishers of men. Near its shores He spoke many of His parables and performed many of His miracles. This region was then the most densely populated part of Palestine. There were nine cities on the borders of the lake, while numerous large villages dotted the plains and hillsides round about. The populous little plain of Gennesaret bordered it on the west. The numerous ruins about the lake attest the existence of these cities, just as the Scriptures intimate. Tiberias, at the southwest, is the only town left on its borders, and this is only once mentioned in the Bible, (John vi:23).

In the Scripture references to this lake, mountains are spoken of as near at hand. We find it surrounded by them on all sides, at least by steep descents from table-lands which, to the eastward are 2,000 feet above. From some point on the eastern shore we read that a herd of swine, impelled by the

legion of devils which had entered into them, rushed violently down, plunged headlong into the sea, and were drowned, (Matt. viii:32). There is one place where this could have been possible. Then, too, there are rock-hewn tombs in the mountains hereabout, as in other places through the country, where demoniacs, abandoning the society and habitations of men, would very naturally seek shelter, (Matt. viii:28). The lake itself still abounds in fish, as when Peter said: "I go a-fishing," (John xxi:3), although comparatively little fishing is now done.

Sudden storms, such as more than once overtook the disciples, (John vi:18) are yet common on the lake. Various travelers have noted this. A recent experience verifies it. A storm — a squall of wind and rain — suddenly arose and swept over the entire length of the lake along its eastern shore, or more accurately, it "came down" upon the lake, as the Scripture has it, (Luke viii:23),— i. e. from the heights above. Soon the sea was in commotion, the waves grew larger and more angry, and whitecaps appeared. After the storm had passed, the waves quieted down almost as quickly as they had been stirred. The natives to-day shrink from venturing far from shore in their wretched boats, fearing these sudden storms which they cannot foresee — as the disciples could not — which sweep down upon the lake through the narrow ravines

or wadies which cut through the hills. All the Scripture references to this little sea and the country adjacent become wonderfully vivid after one has visited them.

Although there are but few references in the Bible to what is now called the Dead Sea, into which the Jordan flows, nor yet to the little lake a few miles north of the Sea of Galilee, which now goes by the name of Lake Huleh, yet everything about both of them harmonizes with these references. The former is called in the Bible the "Salt Sea," (Josh. xviii:19), the latter the "waters of Merom," (Josh. xi:5). It was near the latter that Joshua fought with the combined kings of the north and defeated them, (Josh. xi:8). The frequent allusions of Scripture to the "Great Sea" find their counterpart in the Mediterranean, which forms the western boundary of the land.

The sites of many of the *cities and towns* of Bible times have been identified. No one questions that Jaffa is the Joppa of the Bible. Bethlehem, the city of David, is located on a hill a few miles south of Jerusalem. Here Christ was born. To this place the wise men came from the east. No one questions the genuineness of this location. There may be some question as to the "sacred places" which are pointed out within the city, but none as to the location of the city itself. The same may be said of Nazareth, whose location is not in

doubt. Other cities which may be mentioned are Hebron, Shechem, Samaria. These localities have never been disputed. But no city is oftener referred to in Scripture, as none was the scene of more important events, than Jerusalem. To it the tribes came up for their yearly festivals, here Solomon reared his magnificent temple, here prophets denounced the sins of the people, here battles were fought and the city frequently laid waste, here Jesus mingled among men, here He taught in the temple, here He was crucified, here He rose from the tomb, from Olivet hard by He ascended. Here the mighty scenes of Pentecost, where thousands were converted, were enacted, here Paul was arrested, and here, even yet, Jews wail on set days over the departed glory of the place. There have been changes during the centuries — the depressions between the hills on which the city stands have been largely filled up by the accumulated rubbish of the city and from its repeated destructions. The walls, several times rebuilt since Christ's day, are not, with the exception of the east wall, in precisely the place they then occupied, yet in general location, and in all the topographical surroundings of the city, everything is just as set forth in the sacred Word. It is "beautiful in elevation," as the Psalmist describes it, (Ps. xlviii:2). There is the brook Kidron to the east of it, which must be crossed in going to and from the Mount

of Olives, (John xviii:1). The valley of Hinnom is to the south and west. Mountains and hills are roundabout, as Scripture declares, (Ps. cxxv:2), while the different elevations of the city itself, as Zion, Moriah, and others, are still to be distinguished. That the city was a military stronghold is evident from studying the situation, to say nothing of constant intimations in the Scriptures. The excavations of recent years have thrown much light upon its topography. Doubtless in time all the vexed questions about important sites in and around it will be settled.

The *ruins* of Palestine contribute not a little in the way of testimony to the reality of "the Book" and the truthfulness of its representations. It is not a land of such notable ruins as Greece, or Italy, or Egypt, yet no land, perhaps, more abounds in them. In sections of Judea, for instance, where now for miles there is little appearance of life or habitation, there is hardly a hilltop which is not crowned by the vestiges, more or less distinct and definite, of some fortress, or city, or town of former ages. These ruins indicate conclusively, by their character and number, the existence of a populous civilized life in ancient times, just as many Scripture statements would lead us to infer; while there are evidences on every side that the land was once capable of sustaining a dense population. The disappearance largely of the forest growth with which

the mountains and hills were once covered, must have had its effect upon the climate, diminishing the rainfall as is usual in such cases, and leaving the land more exposed than formerly to the ravages of the drought. In its ancient condition, the land might naturally have seemed to the Israelites, after their long wilderness life, and in comparison with it, to be a land which "floweth with milk and honey," (Num. xiii:27).

The representation of early Old Testament history is that the cities of Palestine were "great and fortified up to heaven," (Deut. i:28). It was these which so terrified the Israelitish spies. But cities then were usually located on hills and had high walls about them. These heights of the land were also utilized as natural altars. Hence the "high places" which were associated with the pagan worship of the people, (Lev. xxvi:30).

Many ruins are seen about the Sea of Galilee confirming the existence of numerous cities there in the olden time. The exact site of Capernaum is not yet absolutely determined. It was either in or close by the plain of Gennesaret bordering on the lake. Samaria, the ancient capital of the Ten Tribes, or Northern Kingdom, was located on an isolated hill 400 feet high in the midst of an extensive valley or amphitheater. When defended by a competent force it was virtually impregnable. It was taken finally only by starving the inhabit-

ants into a surrender. Now only a miserable little village occupies the commanding site, although a number of granite columns which Herod the Great erected around the brow of the hill in rebuilding it, are still standing. No vestige of the original Tyre remains save foundation walls which are occasionally brought to light by digging. The modern town occupies the north half of what was once the island. During his memorable siege of the city, Alexander the Great converted this island into a cape. The present city of Sidon, with a population of about 10,000, unquestionably occupies the same site as the original city. Cæsarea, once the political capital of Judea, is no more, but the ruins indicate the existence there formerly of an important city. The locations of numerous places of lesser note than these have also been identified.

If we pass beyond the Jordan into the region of the Hauran, or go among the Lebanon mountains, we shall find still further confirmatory testimony to the Bible from existing ruins, although of a somewhat different character from that already noticed. In the Hauran, ancient cities remain in a state of preservation which has no parallel. They are deserted, ruined, yet almost entire — as much so as the city of Pompeii in its excavated state. Many of them though deserted for centuries, still maintain their massive walls. There

seems, however, to be some ground for questioning whether the date of these ruins reaches back as far as New Testament times. Of immense structures, there are none to be found save in Egypt which are at all comparable with the ruins of Baalbek in the northern part of the plain between the Lebanon and Anti-Lebanon, and the ruins of Palmyra in the desert to the northeast of Damascus.

The *climate and vegetation* of Palestine afford evidences of the accuracy of the allusions of the Bible writers to them. It is a land of sunshine, and yet there is considerable variety of temperature owing to difference of elevation in different parts. Mount Hermon has streaks of snow upon its summit even in midsummer, while at the Dead Sea the climate is tropical. The former is 9,200 feet above the sea, the latter about 1,300 feet below it. The several seasons are not so distinctly marked as in countries farther to the north. The promise made to Noah as to "seed time and harvest, and cold and heat, and summer and winter," (Gen. viii:22), indicate the leading features of the year. The rainless season makes a natural division of two seasons, summer and winter. The important grain harvest occurs at the time of our spring, although various fruits, like grapes and olives, mature in what would be our fall.

The references by Psalmists, prophets, and historians to the extreme heat of the midday sun and

to the dryness of summer, are verified by the experience of travelers. One who has rested in the cool shade from the oppressive heat can appreciate such expressions as, "the sun shall not smite thee by day," (Ps. cxxi:6), "neither shall the sun strike upon them, nor any heat," (Rev. vii:16). The Bible writers were manifestly familiar, also, with the peculiarities of the climate, such for instance, as the character of the prevailing winds. The east wind was the one which withered vegetation, as in the case of Jonah's gourd, (Jonah iv:8), and the corn in Pharaoh's dream, which appeared as if "blasted with the east wind," (Gen. xli:6). The west wind is more refreshing. It is also the rain wind, as in the passage, "When ye see a cloud rising in the west, straightway ye say, There cometh a shower," (Luke xii:54). Elijah's servant looked over the Mediterranean from Mount Carmel to discover signs of rain, (I Kings xviii:43, 44). The explanation of this difference in the east and west winds is to be found in the fact of an extensive desert off to the east of Palestine, as well as of Egypt, which is the source of the dry and parching winds from that quarter, while to the west of Palestine is the Mediterranean, which supplies the air with rain clouds. The fidelity of the sacred writers to the truth in these respects is thus confirmed.

Similarly with reference to vegetation. In the

spring time there is a profusion of flowers, as when the writer of the "Song of Solomon" said, "I am a rose of Sharon, a lily of the valleys," (Song Sol. ii:1), "He feedeth his flock among the lilies," (Song Sol. ii:16). Christ said: "Consider the lilies of the field," (Matt. vi:28), thus implying their abundance. The trees, too, add their confirmation, although they are less numerous now than in the olden time. In the fable of the trees going forth to choose a king as given in the Old Testament, (Judges ix:7 and ff), the crown was first offered to the olive, next to the fig, next to the vine. And this is the order in which they still rank. The olive is by far the most important, as it is the most extensively cultivated. Olive groves are not uncommon. The fig-tree comes next, with its several crops each year. Next is the vine, which is frequently referred to, and which was cultivated from the earliest times. The bramble was of course worthless as the story itself indicates. Among other trees alluded to are the carob-tree, whose fruit — incorrectly rendered "husks" in both the old version and the revised version — is represented as the food of the swine, which the prodigal would gladly have eaten, (Luke xv:16). This pod of the carob-tree is about four to six inches long and one inch broad, and is much like a pole bean in appearance. The palm-tree is not so common now as it was in Bible times. Stately,

upright, tall, with its large clusters of fruit, it is suggestive of various figures, as of rectitude, and the rewards of the righteous. "The righteous shall flourish like the palm-tree, (Ps. xcii:12). "Cedars of Lebanon" are frequently mentioned. Had such trees been common in Palestine it would not have been necessary for Solomon to have sent to Hiram, king of Tyre, to procure timber from the Lebanon region for use in building the temple, (I Kings v:6). These trees were regarded with reverence by the Jews as being a special work of God, they being larger than any trees of their own land. The little cedar forest only a few acres in extent which still remains in the Lebanon region, though difficult to visit, is nevertheless exceedingly interesting.

If now we turn our attention to *other Bible lands* than Palestine proper — some adjacent, some remote — which were the scenes of various Scripture events or the subject of Scripture references, we shall find the same correspondence between them and the Book, the same evidence of fidelity on the part of the sacred writers. References to Damascus, capital of ancient Syria, perhaps the oldest city in the world, meet us from the earliest Bible times. Paul's conversion occurred when he was nearing it, (Acts ix:3 and ff). After that he was led into the city, where he abode with a certain man

named Judas in the "street which is called Straight," (Acts ix:11), where Ananias found him. From secular records it appears that then and for a long time afterward, a noble street extended in a straight line through the city — a mile in length, and a hundred feet wide. Remains of the two colonnades which divided it into three sections are to be seen scattered along the line of the present street, which still bears the name Straight, and which is believed to be the same, or nearly the same, in location, with the one of old. The present street, however, is narrow. Evidently the shops have gradually encroached upon it and added to its irregularity. At the western terminus of the street, the grand Roman Portal of the olden time, and through which Paul doubtless passed in entering the city, may be traced in outline.

The river Barada, the "Abana" of ancient Scripture, is a swift-flowing stream, and the main source of the beauty and fertility of the Damascus plain through which it flows. The river Jordan, shallow and riley, bears no comparison with it in the purity and freshness of its waters. Well might Naaman, the Syrian leper, ask the messenger of Elisha: "Are not Abana and Pharpar, the rivers of Damascus, better than all the waters of Israel? May I not wash in them (instead of the Jordan) and be clean?" (II Kings v:12).

An interesting study in connection with the sub-

ject before us is the account of Paul's missionary journeys. West of the conspicuous Acropolis of Athens, a short distance away, is a smaller eminence — a huge rock rising abruptly on its south side 30 feet, and 40 feet on its north side, and about 600 feet long. It is called Mars Hill, and on top of it the council of Areopagus was accustomed to hold its sessions. The Agora or market-place lay immediately to the south of it. Near the eastern end of the hill is a flight of steps cut in the rock and leading from the market-place to the top. Most of the original twenty-one steps are still traceable, some of them being almost perfect. Near the head of this stairway a considerable space has been cut away in the rock, leaving a kind of bench around it as if intended for seats. Here it is believed the judges held their court. Here it is also believed Paul repaired after he had disputed with the people in the market-place, and had been invited to explain to the philosophers still further in regard to his new doctrines. To read here the account of Paul's visit to Athens, and his address beginning: "Ye men of Athens," is exceedingly interesting, and gives a sense of reality to the scene as described in the Acts, (Acts xvii:16-31).

At Ephesus there is little else than ruins at the present time. The outline of the open theater, cut out from the side of a hill, is clearly to be recog-

nized even yet, while the excavations of recent years have brought to light the ruins of the once magnificent temple of the pagan goddess Diana, (Acts xix). Then there is Paul's voyage to Rome on the Mediterranean. The account of it, and of the shipwreck, as given in the book of Acts, (ch. xxvii), is manifestly the report of an eyewitness, and he a landsman. The statements made have been verified in every particular, so far as it is possible to verify such details as are given. The mountainous character of the island of Crete, (v. 13), was such as would afford protection on its south side from the storm which blew from the north and northeast at the time the vessel in which Paul was sailing reached it. A little island, corresponding with Cauda, (v. 16), lies a short distance to the south of the mainland of Crete, just the location which we should expect to find from the narrative. After two weeks of drifting in the fearful storm which prevailed and during which there was constant danger that the craft would founder, it drew near to some shore, as was judged, because of the sound of breakers in the distance. Almost all Biblical scholars agree that the shipwreck took place in what is the present St. Paul's Bay of the island of Malta, then called Melita, (Acts xxviii:1). The correspondence between the place and the Scripture account of the wreck, has often been noted. All the requirements of the

narrative are met. Moreover the island of Malta is in the direct line of ships sailing from Alexandria to Italy. So we do not wonder at learning that a corn ship from the former place was wintering there. On this Paul took passage, still a prisoner, to go as far as Puteoli, (Acts xxviii:13), which is near the present Naples. Here at Puteoli was an immense mole or pier, consisting of twenty-five arches of solid masonry. Of these, the ruins of thirteen yet remain, some of them quite well preserved. It was upon this pier, undoubtedly, that Paul disembarked.

Later Paul set out for Rome, evidently going by the Appian Way, (Acts xxviii:15), one of the oldest and most frequented and famous of the paved roads extending from Rome to different parts of Italy. There are many things of deep interest to the Christian student in Rome, but aside from the fact that here "Paul was suffered to abide by himself," (Acts xxviii:16), though under guard, and that from this city he wrote several of his epistles, there is little which is certainly known in regard to the locality of the apostle's house, or of the prison in which he was afterward incarcerated. The Arch of Titus which was constructed later to commemorate Titus' conquest of Jerusalem in the year 70 A. D., still stands, quite well preserved. On one side, within the passageway beneath, or through it, is a group of sculptured figures repre-

senting the Jews carrying golden candlesticks and the golden table of shewbread on bars of wood covered with gold. The representation corresponds perfectly with the description of these vessels in Exodus. They were taken from the Temple at Jerusalem and brought to Rome by its conqueror.

Nineveh and Babylon are referred to chiefly in the Old Testament. Recent excavations testify to their greatness. Of Egypt, where the customs of to-day are largely the same as those in the time of Moses and before, Sir Samuel W. Baker, a celebrated English tourist, referring to the customs of the native tribes, says: "This striking similarity to the descriptions in the Old Testament, is exceedingly interesting to a traveler when residing among these curious and original people. With the Bible in one hand, and these unchanged tribes before the eyes, there is a thrilling illustration of the sacred record; the past becomes the present; the veil of 3,000 years is raised, and the living picture is a witness to the exactness of the historical description." Sinai was just the place for the solemn and sacred scene of giving the law. There is striking correspondence between the wild surroundings of that region to-day and the description of that notable event in the book of Exodus, (ch. xix).

But illustrations of the thought with which we started out, viz: the topographical and other confirmations of Scripture to be found in Bible lands

to-day, and the light they throw upon it, might be indefinitely continued. Illustrations are to be found on every hand. Those which have been given show conclusively that the Land and the Book fit perfectly into each other, that the one is the complement of the other. The accuracy of the records is confirmed. The natural and inevitable inference is, that if the Bible writers, often hundreds of years apart, were so minutely accurate in all their references and incidental allusions to the topographical features of the land, a similar and even more scrupulous regard for the truth would be likely to characterize their testimony with reference to events vastly more important, even those which are of infinite moment to all mankind, which relate to our highest interests both here and hereafter, particularly those which gather about the life and teachings, the death and resurrection of our Lord Jesus Christ. When we reflect that this argument for the truth of Scripture is but one of many strands of the cable which holds the anchor of our faith, there is certainly abundant ground for the conviction that confidence in the Christ of the Gospels, and in His Word of truth, rests upon an absolutely immovable foundation.

Many a skeptic has been profoundly impressed by a visit to the Holy Land. Such was the case with the celebrated French rationalist, Renan. He sums up his impressions in these words: "The

scientific commission for the exploration of ancient Phœnicia of which I was director in 1860 and 1861, led me to reside on the frontiers of Galilee, and to traverse it frequently. I have traveled through the evangelical province in every direction. I have visited Jerusalem, Hebron, and Samaria; scarcely any locality important in the history of Jesus has escaped me. All this history, which, at a distance, seems floating in the clouds of an unreal world, thus assumed a body, a solidity, which astonished me. The striking accord of the texts and the places, the wonderful harmony of the evangelical ideal with the landscape which served as its setting, were to me as a revelation. I had before my eyes a fifth Gospel — torn, but legible, and thenceforth, through the narrations of Matthew and Mark, instead of an abstract being which one should say had never existed, I saw a wonderful human form live and move.”

CHAPTER III

MANNERS AND CUSTOMS

WHOEVER travels through Palestine, Bible in hand, can hardly fail to be impressed by the fact that apart from any theories of inspiration or of supernatural revelations, its contents and its form are strictly in accordance with the character of the land in which it had its origin. Its roots are in the state of things which prevailed among the Jewish people at the time when it was written. The customs, the conditions of society, the circumstances of the time, form the background of the sacred Word. The Bible is something more than a natural product, but on its human side it is as truly a natural development of the Jewish people, as other literatures have been the natural outgrowths of the people they represent. In order properly to appreciate the Bible, we need to understand the conditions out of which it sprung. We need to place ourselves back in the times in which it was written. Especially is it important to understand the manners and customs which prevailed during its composition, since many of them,

differing widely from our own, are frequently referred to as if well understood. Such knowledge contributes much to an intelligent comprehension of the Scriptures.

Oriental customs of to-day are mainly the same as those of ancient times. There has been little change in this respect. This is particularly true in Bible lands. For the most part these customs still exist in their original integrity. The modes of life of the patriarchal era find their counterpart largely in what may be seen among the peasant population of those lands to-day. One who lived among them many years has graphically said: "Manners, customs, usages, all that you can set down to the score of the national, the social, or the conventional, are precisely as different from yours, as the East is from the West. They sit when you stand; they lie when you sit; they do to the head what you do to the feet; you shave the beard, they shave the head; you remove the hat, they touch the breast; you use the lips in salutation, they touch the forehead and cheek; your house looks outward, their's look inward; you go out to take a walk, they go up to the flat roof to enjoy the fresh air; you bring your daughters out, they keep their wives and daughters in; your ladies go barefaced, their ladies are always covered." Not a day passes with the observant traveler in

which new significance is not imparted to some passage of Scripture by what is seen in the common life of the simple inhabitants.

To the American traveler in the Holy Land, nothing contrasts more strongly with the aspect of his own country than the appearance of the *houses*. None are built of wood, there are no shingled or slated roofs, chimneys are unseen, both fireplaces and stoves are unknown. The building material of the country is either stone or sun-dried bricks; hewed stone is used for the better structures, rough stone for the rest. Frequently a stone stairway on the outside leads to the roof, which is always flat, as was the case in Bible times. The question was once raised in a Sunday School class of boys as to how it was possible for David to walk upon the roof of his house, the teacher and all the class supposing that the roofs of houses in Palestine were like those in this country. The teacher looked wise and solemn and reprimanded the boys, saying: "You should not cavil at the Word of God." Another teacher who had overheard the discussion said to the first one, later: "You should not have answered the boys in that way; you ought rather to have said: 'It might be impossible for man, unaided, to do so, but with God all things are possible.'" With a better understanding of Oriental architectural customs, there would have

been no occasion for resorting to that kind of an explanation.

These flat roofs are usually constructed by first laying large beams across from wall to wall, then rude joists, on which are arranged small poles placed close together, or brushwood. This is covered with a layer of heather and reeds, and upon this, earth is spread to the thickness of several inches, which is trodden or rolled hard. This rolling is often repeated as these roofs are apt to leak. For this purpose a stone roller is often kept ready for use on the roofs of the houses. Grass is frequently seen growing on these roofs. Thus we see the force of what the Psalmist says of all that hate Zion: "Let them be as the grass upon the housetops, which withereth before it groweth up," (Ps. cxxix:6). While a starting place for the grass is afforded by the earth on the roof, the frequent use of the roller and the trampling of feet give it but a poor chance of life.

With roofs thus constructed, a heavy shower naturally soon finds its way through. The drops trickling down into the room below render it very uncomfortable if not actually uninhabitable. This gives significance to the proverb of the wise man: "A continual dropping in a very rainy day and a contentious woman are alike," (Prov. xxvii:15).

It is customary to build arbors or booths of reeds or branches of trees on these flat roofs for the pur-

pose of shade and shelter, or for rest during the oppressive heat of the daytime in summer. Often, too, the roof is used as a sleeping place at night, and these booths form chambers when the occupants do not use the open roof. These booths, while excellent for the purposes for which they were designed, would of course be very undesirable as a place of permanent residence. They would afford little protection from rain and cold. And yet the wise man thinks that such a place as this even, would be preferable to a large house with plenty of room and all conveniences, with an uncongenial, noisy, quarrelsome spirit for companionship. "It is better," he says, "to dwell in the corner of the housetop, than with a contentious woman in a wide house," (Prov. xxi:9). The upper room or "chamber," to which there are several Scripture references, was simply a permanent form of the booth or arbor. When several rooms were thus built on the roof, it became the summer house, in contrast with the winter house down stairs, (see II Kings iv:10, Mark xiv:15, Acts i:13, ix:37, xx:8).

Among the peasantry, one of the chief uses of the flat roof is for the drying of grain, summer fruits, and fuel for winter use. Frequently in passing through the country to-day, one sees grain of some kind thus spread out on the roof. Thus we see how the stalks of flax upon the roof of Rahab's house, placed there probably to dry, could

afford a convenient hiding place for the spies of Joshua. "She had brought them," we read, "up to the roof, and hid them with the stalks of flax, which she had laid in order upon the roof," (Josh. ii:6). Samuel "communed with Saul upon the housetop," (I Sam. ix:25) — a very suitable place for conference, as it was the resort also of families in the cool of evening for air and exercise, or was resorted to in times of public calamity for purposes of lamentation, (Jer. xlviii:38). Around the edge of the roofs of some of these houses, there is a low wall or battlement to prevent persons from falling off. Ages before, Moses had given directions that the houses should be so built. "When thou buildest a new house, then thou shalt make a battlement for thy roof, that thou bring not blood upon thy house, if any man fall from thence," (Deut. xxii:8). Such a wall as this might have served as a screen from observation when people went up to the housetop to pray, as Peter did at Joppa at the sixth hour, when he fell into a trance and beheld the vision of "all manner of four-footed beasts and creeping things of the earth and birds of the heaven" in "a certain vessel descending as it were a great sheet, let down by four corners upon the earth," from the open heaven, (Acts x:11, 12) — a vision which taught him a lesson of tolerance toward the Gentiles, and prepared him

to respond to the call of Cornelius, the Roman centurion, at Cæsarea, (Acts x:22).

Almost all the inhabitants of Palestine — and the same is true in most oriental lands — have their homes in *cities and villages*. Few houses are seen in the open country. This custom of congregating in towns and cities undoubtedly grew out of the needs of the times ages ago, and are felt even yet. One of the chief reasons for this was the unsettled state of the country. Dwelling thus closely together, the people would be more secure against attack from pillaging and marauding bands. They could defend themselves and their possessions the more readily. Another reason was the necessity of water. Hence a fountain or spring often gave its name to the village which was built beside it. The land does not abound in springs and streams as is the case in some portions of our own country. They are few and far between. Living thus together in a village, husbandmen would be obliged to “go forth” to their work in the fields, which are often at a considerable distance from their homes, as when, in the parable, “the sower went forth to sow,” (Matt. xiii:3).

It is noticeable that almost all the cities and villages are located on elevated sites. Many of them are perched upon the tops of high hills, and

from the ruins which have been discovered, such places were selected more frequently in ancient times than at present. Defense against attacking enemies was thus made easier. Jerusalem is on an elevation embracing several hills, although the depressions between them are now nearly filled up by the debris of centuries. Bethlehem is upon a hill, Nazareth is upon a hillside, Samaria, capital of the Northern Kingdom, was upon a conspicuous hill of the same name, where now, aside from a few ruins of former splendor, only a contemptible Arab village occupies the commanding site. The same was true of cities in other eastern countries. Rome, Athens, Constantinople, were located upon hills. This fact gives added significance to the words of Christ: "A city set on a hill cannot be hid," (Matt. v:14). Thus is the Christian conspicuous before the world; hence the importance that he be like his Master in uprightness of character, in sweetness of spirit, in ministries of love.

Many of the cities are still surrounded by walls or the remains of them, although Jerusalem is the only city in Palestine whose walls are preserved entire. These walled cities undoubtedly correspond to the "fenced cities" of old. Of course the walls are of little use now, except to regulate the ingress and the egress of the people. The gates of these walled cities were usually closed at sundown, or shortly after. This was a precaution against the

approach of an unseen enemy to attack the city under cover of the night. If travelers journeying toward the city did not reach it before sundown, they were compelled to spend the night outside exposed to storms and robbers. The heavenly city, where there is no darkness, and where nothing hostile can enter, is represented as in marked contrast with the earthly cities with which the people were familiar. Its gates are always open in token of friendly welcome, (Rev. xxi:25).

In Damascus the traveler may see how sometimes the wall of a house was also a portion of the city wall. Through its windows, though high above the ground — and which often project beyond the wall itself like a kind of bay window — access may be had to the regions outside. Thus probably David escaped when “Saul sent messengers unto David’s house, to watch him, and to slay him in the morning,” (I Sam. xix:11). So Paul escaped from Damascus. The Jews watched the gates by day and by night to kill him. “But his disciples took him by night, and let him down through the wall, lowering him in a basket,” (Acts ix:25). The place where this is supposed to have occurred is pointed out to visitors, and one may contemplate it with about the same confidence with which he looks upon pieces of the “true cross” which are preserved in some of the capitals of Europe; or upon the skulls of the three wise men

from the East who sought out the infant Savior at Bethlehem, which are shown, along with other invaluable treasures, for a consideration, in the cathedral at Cologne; or into the small hole in the ground in the basement of a Romish Church to the southwest of Jerusalem, which is preserved and protected with the utmost care, as being the hole from which the tree was taken, out of which the Savior's cross was made!

The allusions in the Scriptures seem to harmonize with the customs and traditions of the country to-day. This is an unconscious testimony to the accuracy and care with which the Scripture writers made their report.

The present *agricultural customs* of the people reflect the usage of ancient Bible times, and throw light upon many passages otherwise more or less obscure. To one not familiar with the practices of the people, the description in the nineteenth chapter of First Kings of the meeting between Elijah and Elisha in the field, the latter "plowing with twelve yoke of oxen before him, and he with the twelfth," (I Kings xix:19), is likely to be misleading. It seems strange to think of twenty-four oxen being required for a single plow, as might be inferred from the language used. But after one has seen men engaged in this work in that country, the Scripture language is no longer difficult to un-

derstand. The plow is a very rude affair, very light and simple, and does little more than scratch the soil, three inches being perhaps an average depth of the furrow. Sometimes the plow is made of the trunk of a small tree having two branches running in opposite directions, one branch serving as the plow, the other as the handle for steadying and guiding it. But not all plows are as primitive as this. Usually there is a small share of iron, a kind of rude hoe, or somewhat resembling a short sword. Thus it would not be difficult either to beat "plowshares into swords" as Joel has it, (Joel iii:10), or "swords into plowshares" as Isaiah says, (ii:4). The handle resembles that of a spade with a cross-piece at the top. This is held in one hand, while in the other the plowman carries a short rod or stick. This latter is furnished at one end with a flat piece of iron with which to clean the share, and at the other with a sharp spike. This rod was anciently called an ox-goad, and with it the oxen were reminded, when necessary, of their duty, and spurred on to do it. We read of one of the deliverers of Israel in the times of the Judges "who smote of the Philistines 600 men with an ox-goad," (Judges iii:31).

To this plow a long pole or tongue was attached — unless the trunk of the tree served the purpose — to connect it with the yoke of the cattle. This yoke is also a very rude affair — simply a straight

pole about six feet long and three inches in diameter, which lies on the necks of the oxen. It is fastened to their necks not by bows, but by ropes. The plowmen often work in company. It is no unusual thing to see half a dozen plowmen thus at work, each plow having its plowman and yoke of oxen, and all moving slowly along in single file. Sometimes more than a dozen plows have been seen at work in this way. Thus we can see how Elisha was "plowing, with twelve yoke of oxen before him." There were twelve plows in file, each with its own plowman and yoke of oxen, and he had charge of the twelfth or last plow. When several men plow together, one sower—who walks immediately in front of them scattering the seed that it may be plowed under—answers for them all.

Other branches of agriculture are pursued in an equally primitive manner. With the exception of vineyards and vegetable gardens, the fields were never protected by walls and fences. Each man's property had its boundary stones or natural landmarks. Severe penalties were attached to any tampering with these boundary marks. The roads of the country are merely bridle-paths, which often run by the side of, or through the unenclosed fields. Hence it sometimes happened that as the sower scattered his seed, some of it fell on the beaten path. So it was in the parable of the sower:—"Some seed fell by the way side." Thus exposed,

it is not strange that "the birds came and devoured it," (Mark iv:4).

In another parable "The kingdom of heaven is likened unto a man that sowed good seed in his field: but while men slept, his enemy came and sowed tares also among the wheat, and went away," (Matt. xiii:24, 25). It was a mean, cowardly thing to do. One who is familiar with oriental lands says that the exact counterpart of this nocturnal villainy may be found in some of these lands to-day. A man wishing to do his enemy an injury, watches for the time when he shall have finished plowing his field, and then goes in the night and scatters the seed of a noxious weed over it, which springs up even before the good seed, and cannot be removed while it is growing, without also uprooting the grain. The only thing to be done is to let them grow together till the harvest. Sometimes it will require years before the field can be rid of the troublesome weed. The good and the bad in the kingdom must often, in like manner, be left to grow together till the harvest. It would be impossible always to separate them before that time without great spiritual damage. At the harvest of the last day, however, the separation will come, when the bad will be destroyed and the good preserved, as in the case of the tares and the wheat.

In this country when the grain is ripe, the

farmer is always in a hurry to harvest and secure it. But the greatest deliberation marks all the movements of the oriental husbandman. He is in no haste. Even if the grain is dead-ripe, he handles it so carefully that scarcely any of it is lost. He cuts it with a sickle, as did his fathers in the days of Abraham, and as our fathers did less than a hundred years ago. The grain is then tied in little bundles, loaded on the backs of men, donkeys, or camels, and transferred to the heap at the threshing floor which is near the village. When the grain is harvested and laid in heaps near together — each man having his own heap — the threshing begins.

The threshing floor is a piece of hard, level ground, circular in shape, about 25 to 30 or 40 feet in diameter, made harder by beating and tramping, or, when it can be found of sufficient size, the flat surface of a rock answers the purpose. The site of the Temple at Jerusalem was originally a threshing floor. Upon the floor thus prepared, the grain is spread out perhaps a foot in depth, and then oxen, horses, or mules are driven around upon it. In this way most of the kernels are separated from the straw. Finally a rough slide or sledge having sharp stones let into the under surface, is dragged around by a pair of oxen, a man standing upon the sledge, goad in hand. These are the oxen which must not be muzzled, but al-

lowed to pick up the straw as they desire, (Deut. xxv:4). This command is still obeyed by most of the farmers in Palestine, although some niggardly peasants refuse to do so. Paul intimates that there were just such people in the church of God in his day, people who would hinder the apostles from receiving the just recompense of their toil, (I Cor. ix). When sufficiently threshed, the broken straws, grain, and chaff, are piled up in the center of the threshing floor, or at a short distance from it, and another bed of grain is laid down to go through the same process. This floor being unenclosed and exposed to robbers, it was necessary for the proprietor or some trusty servant to keep up a watch. We therefore find that Boaz, after eating his supper, "went to lie down at the end of the heap of grain," (Ruth iii:7). This is still done by the proprietors of threshing floors in Palestine. The grain is carefully watched until it is all threshed and garnered.

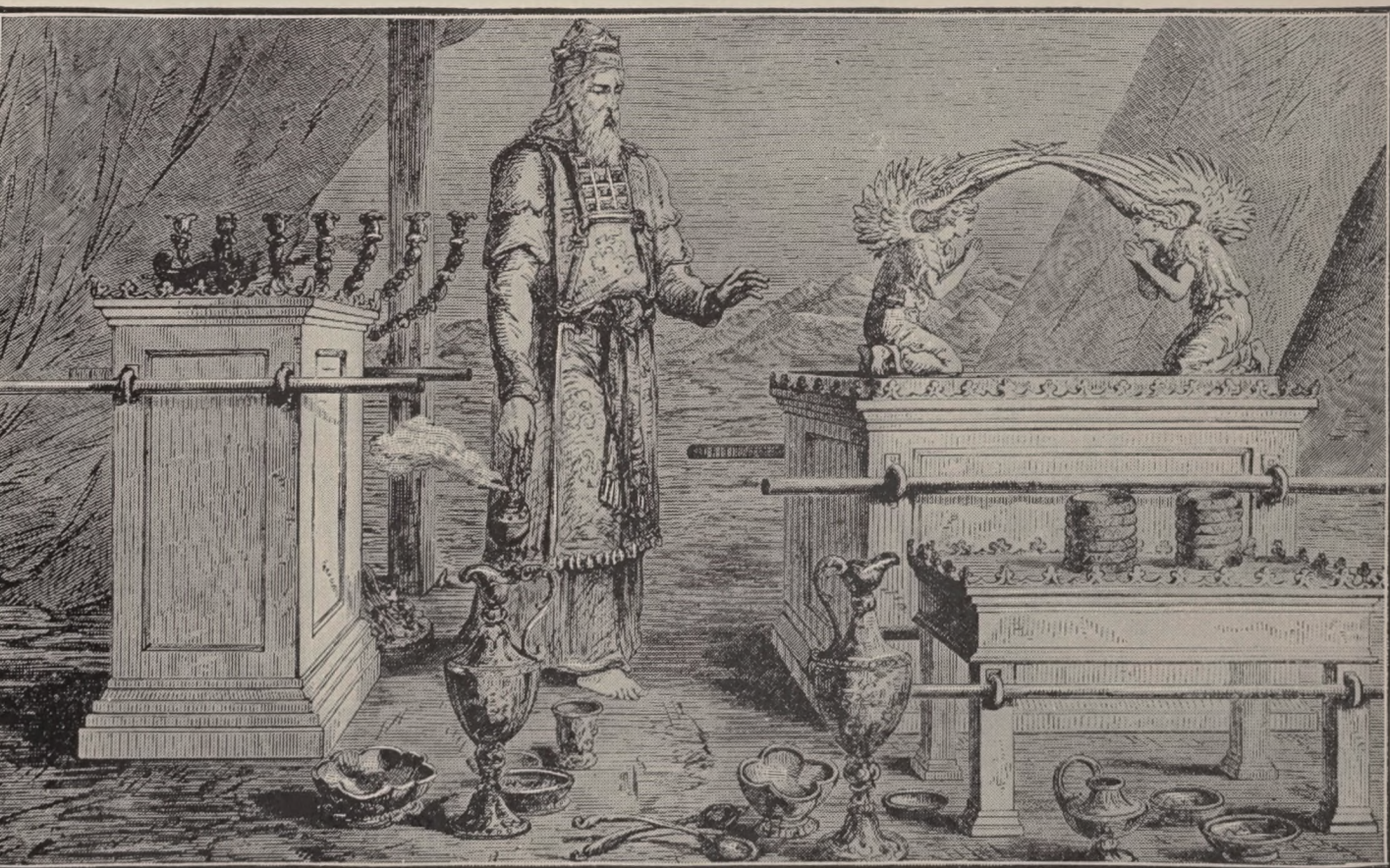
After the threshing comes the winnowing. When the wind is favorable, a little grain from the pile, with its mixture of straw and chaff, is tossed into the air by means of the fan and shovel, the fan being a simple three-pronged wooden pitchfork. The coarser straw is deposited a little distance off, while the "wind driveth away" the chaff, (Ps. i:4). When the chaff accumulates in any quantity, as it sometimes does at large thresh-

ing floors, it is burnt up. The grain falls directly to the ground. As it still contains more or less straw and chaff, a wooden shovel is next employed in tossing it. Then, by means of a sieve, the grain is finally cleansed from any dirt or other impurities which may yet remain. A knowledge of these facts in regard to the threshing and winnowing of grain adds vividness to the language of John the Baptist in his reference to the One who was to come after him, "whose fan is in his hand, and he will thoroughly cleanse his threshing-floor; and he will gather his wheat into the garner, but the chaff he will burn up with unquenchable fire," (Matt. iii:12). The time for winnowing was usually in the evening, this time being selected not only because it was cooler than during the day, but because of the increase of the wind which enabled the husbandman to winnow more thoroughly. Thus we read that Naomi said to Ruth concerning Boaz: "Behold, he winnoweth barley to-night in the threshing-floor," (Ruth iii:2).

For the purpose of grinding the winnowed grain, none but hand-mills were anciently employed. These are frequently seen by the traveler to-day, although water-mills and horse-mills have now been more or less in use for a long time. The hand-mill consists of two circular stones about a foot or a foot and a-half in diameter, the lower or nether stone, which is sometimes harder and heavier than



WOMEN GRINDING GRAIN.



THE HIGH PRIEST, THE TABLE FOR BREAD AND THE HOLY ARK.

the upper, having often a slightly convex surface, the upper being hollowed out to fit it. Job, in speaking of the leviathan or crocodile says: "His heart is as firm as a stone; yea, firm as the nether millstone," (Job xli:24). On one side of the upper stone, near the edge, a wooden peg or handle is inserted. In the center is the hole for the pivot and through which the grain falls upon the lower stone. The work of grinding was usually performed by women. They seem to have been set to menial tasks and to various forms of drudgery in Bible times, as they are in oriental lands to-day. Sometimes one woman works at the mill alone, sitting on the ground as she grinds, but usually two work together with the millstone between them, each holding the wooden peg. This throws light upon the passage: "Two women shall be grinding at the mill; one is taken, and one is left," (Matt. xxiv:41). The work of grinding is very laborious. The stones, as they crush the grain, give forth a grating sound. This is frequently referred to in the Scriptures, as when Jeremiah speaks of the "sound of the millstones," (Jer. xxv:10). In the last chapter of Ecclesiastes, in that beautiful description of old age, this figurative clause appears: "When the sound of the grinding is low," (Eccl. xii:4), as one's teeth, in old age, are nearly gone. Christ says of one who causes weak disciples to stumble: "It is profitable for him that

a great millstone should be hanged about his neck, and that he should be sunk in the depth of the sea," (Matt. xviii:6).

Thus we see how faithful the Scriptures are to the agricultural usages of the times, even in their incidental allusions, and how an understanding of these usages helps to render the spiritual teaching in connection with them more interesting and impressive.

There are numerous allusions in the Scriptures to *vineyards* and the culture of the vine. Grape culture is still a prominent occupation in Palestine. Vineyards are found all over the country. The traveler sees many of them as he rides along. Sometimes the vines are planted on the side of a terraced hill, or on the gently-sloping ground at the foot of a hill. These sunny slopes are frequently fenced with walls of stone or a hedge of thorny plants, or with both combined. Vineyards are particularly numerous near Hebron in the southern part of the country. This section seems to be specially favorable for grape culture. No doubt it was from this vicinity that the spies procured the great clusters of grapes which they brought into the Israelitish camp at Kadesh-Barnea after their circuit of the promised land, (Num. xiii:23). Grape clusters from that region are still so large as to excite the comment of travelers.

In these vineyards, or in many of them, towers were placed. Such towers may still be seen. They were designed as a place of temporary dwelling for the guard, who watched over the vineyard while the fruit was ripening. It was also sometimes used as a temporary abode by the owner during the season of vintage. Though many of the towers were frail edifices — built for a single season only — others were more durable, being built of stone. They were either circular or square, and varied in height from 15 to 50 feet. This was a very familiar sight in Christ's time, and is referred to in one of His parables: "There was a man that was a householder, who planted a vineyard, and set a hedge about it, and digged a winepress in it, and built a tower," (Matt. xxi:33). The winepress consisted of two parts, the receptacle for the grapes and the vat for the liquor. These were cut in the solid rock with a partition left between them, the latter being a little lower than the other. A small hole in the partition permitted the wine, when pressed out of the grapes, to pass into the vat. The grapes were thrown into the upper receptacle, and then trodden by the feet of men, women, and children. As they trod the grapes they kept time with hand clapping and snatches of song, (Is. xvi:10). After being thus pressed by the feet, the grape skins were collected into a heap upon which a flat stone was laid, after

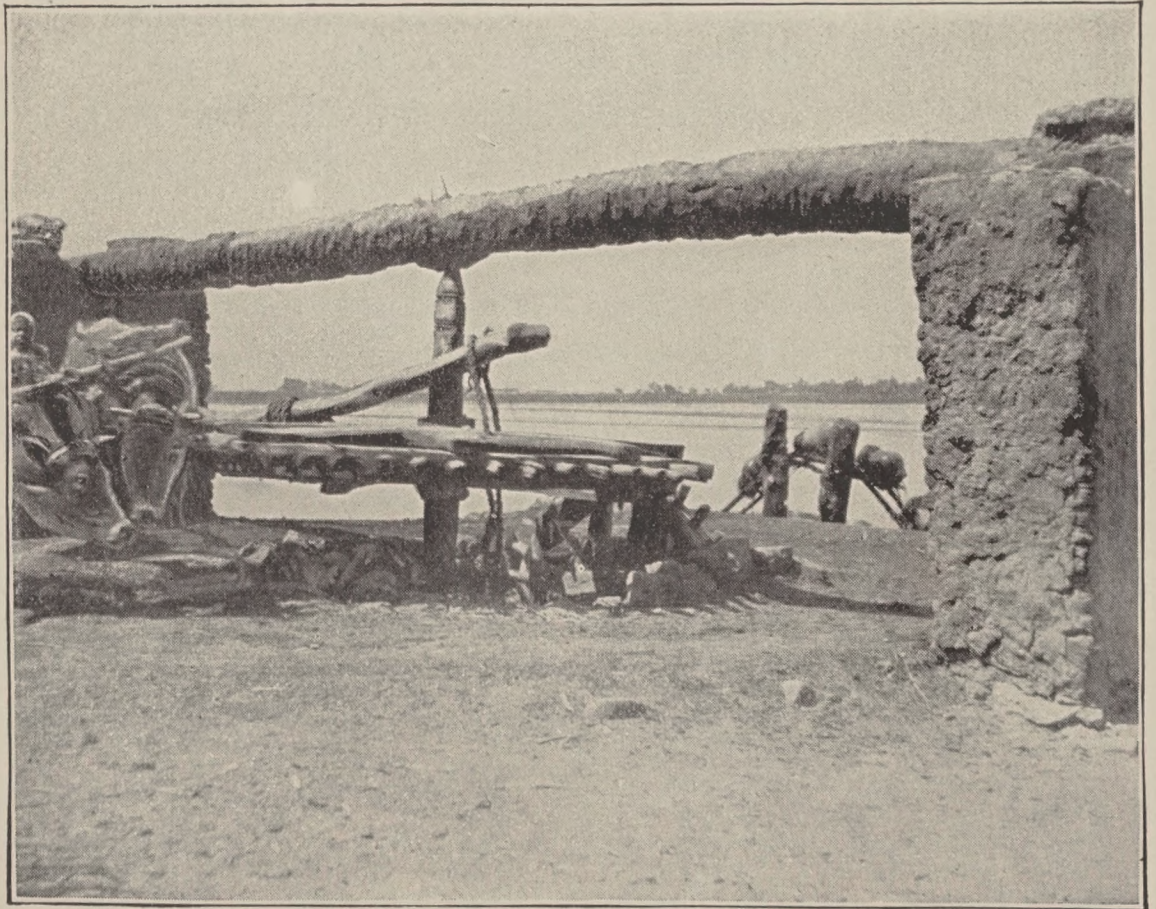
which they were subjected to pressure from a large heavily weighted beam, the juice flowing into the lower receptacle through the opening in the partition. "And they went out into the field, and gathered their vineyards, and trod the grapes, and held festival," (Judges ix:27). "In those days saw I in Judah some men treading winepresses on the Sabbath," (Neh. xiii:15). To tread the winepresses alone was an expression indicative of desolation. "I have trodden the winepress alone; and of the people there was no man with me," (Isa. lxiii:3).

Vineyards were not devoted exclusively to vines. Fruit trees of various kinds were sometimes planted within their limits, so that it was not incorrect to speak of a fig tree, for instance, as being planted in a vineyard. Thus, "A certain man had a fig tree planted in his vineyard," (Luke xiii:6). On one occasion Christ said, speaking of the scribes and Pharisees: "Ye blind guides, that strain out the gnat, and swallow the camel!" (Matt. xxiii:24). In common with other oriental people, the Jews strained their wine before drinking it, in order to free it from dregs and to clean it of the insects, which, in a hot climate, collected about it. Sometimes a cloth sieve was employed for this purpose. The idea of the passage would seem to be the utter inconsistency of the scribes and Pharisees, whom Christ was at this time condemn-



Permission of Robt. U. Jacob.

A GOATSKIN BOTTLE.



Permission of Robt. U. Jacob.

WHEEL TURNED BY OXEN.

ing. They were very particular about little things, minute technicalities of the law, matters of trivial importance relatively, while at the same time they were utterly neglectful of the weightier, the all-important matters — strenuous to appear right outwardly, regardless of sin and all manner of villainess in their hearts. Some very startling expressions are employed to describe them. They make long prayers, and yet “devour widows’ houses,” (Luke xx:47). They “tithe mint and anise and cummin, and have left undone the weightier matters of the law, justice, and mercy, and faith,” (Matt. xxiii:23). They are “like unto whited sepulchers,” or whitewashed tombs such as may now be seen in the country — “which outwardly appear beautiful, but inwardly are full of dead men’s bones and of all uncleanness.” “Even so,” says Christ, “ye also outwardly appear righteous unto men, but inwardly ye are full of hypocrisy and iniquity,” (Matt. xxiii:27, 28).

Here we may speak of the strange custom which has come down from ancient times, and which the traveler frequently notices in the cities and towns of Palestine or in other eastern places, of using the skins of animals for carrying water, wine, and milk. Our common version terms them “bottles.” Skins of goats and kids are commonly used for this purpose, although when a long journey is to be taken, the hide of the buffalo is preferred as

being more durable. The head and feet of the animal are cut off and the skin is stripped whole from the body. The neck and legs are each drawn together and fastened with a cord. Sometimes the skin of the neck, sometimes that of one of the fore-legs is used as the aperture through which the liquid may be poured out. When the skin or "bottle" is filled, it has the shape of the original animal. Sometimes these skins are employed for holding wine, which was a more common beverage before the Mohammedan invasion of the country than it is at present. When the skin is green, it is soft and flexible, and is stretched by the fermentation of the liquor, but when it becomes old and dry, the fermentation of the new wine causes it to crack and burst. "Neither do men put new wine into old wine-skins: else the skins burst, and the wine is spilled, and the skins perish: but they put new wine into fresh wine-skins, and both are preserved," (Matt. ix:17. After witnessing the processes of the natives in pressing out the juice of the grape — either treading the grapes with their bare feet which are not always scrupulously clean, or moving about barefoot in the shallow vat while operating a rude winepress, the juice trickling along over the floor meanwhile and flowing into the lower vat — one is led to wonder if the desire of natives and of travelers for that kind of refreshment does not begin to subside. And the query has

often risen whether if people at home only knew or realized of what villainous compounds the drinks they purchase in the saloon are composed, and understood all the processes involved in preparing them, they would not easily be persuaded to sign the pledge and to reform without delay!

These skins are in constant use in the country for carrying water on journeys, or for churning milk. The latter is an interesting, if not an inviting process. Three poles a few feet apart are set up, then brought together and fastened at the top. From the point of union cords are let down and fastened to the legs of the skin, which is filled with goat's milk — goats being the cows of the country — and this is shaken back and forth by women until the butter comes. Sometimes the milk-filled skin is beaten with sticks, or is placed on the ground and trodden upon; or sometimes, again, it is pressed or squeezed with the hands. In these various ways the milk is agitated and gradually coagulates.

The present habits of *shepherds* in the care of sheep illustrate many passages of Scripture. By day and by night the shepherd is with his sheep. This was rendered necessary by the exposed nature of the land and the presence of danger from wild animals and robbers. The shepherd leading his sheep to pasture is one of the most fa-

miliar sights in the land. If he appears to be escaping from them, they run after him, and are terrified when he is out of sight, or when a stranger appears in his place. The voice of the latter has no effect upon them, although they recognize the shepherd's voice readily and respond when he calls them. It is said that names are given to the sheep individually and that each one comes when called by it. The intimate relation between Christ and His disciples is thus illustrated by Him: "And he calleth his own sheep by name, and leadeth them out. When he hath put forth all his own, he goeth before them, and the sheep follow him: for they know his voice. And a stranger will they not follow, but will flee from him: for they know not the voice of strangers," (John x:3-5).

The sheep-folds of Syria, which no doubt resemble those of ancient times, are low, flat buildings, opening into a court. These buildings are surrounded by a stone wall, on the top of which is a layer of thorns. A doorway, only wide enough for a man to pass through, forms the entrance. But while there is a doorway, there is no door proper. The shepherd is himself the door. He plants himself in the opening, and, wrapped in his great cloak of skins, guards the fold against the enemies of the flock. "I am the door; by me if any man enter in, he shall be saved, and shall go in and go out, and shall find pasture," (John x:9).

“He that entereth not by the door into the fold of the sheep, but climbeth up some other way, the same is a thief and a robber,” (John x:1).

Sheep and goats are allowed to mingle during the day while at pasturage, but at night they are separated. Thus the Savior seeks to illustrate the truth, that though the righteous and the wicked live together in the world, there will come a time of separation. “And he shall separate them one from another, as the shepherd separateth the sheep from the goats,” (Matt. xxv:32). The twenty-third Psalm gives us a beautiful, as well as a profound, expression of trust in God. How significant it is seen to be, in view of the facts in regard to sheep and shepherds which have been presented. “Jehovah is my shepherd; I shall not want. He maketh me to lie down in green pastures; He leadeth me beside still waters,” (Ps. xxiii:1, 2). The representation also is that the redeemed and glorified are still being led to the living fountains of waters. “For the Lamb that is in the midst of the throne shall be their shepherd, and shall guide them unto fountains of waters of life,” (Rev. vii:17).

Such appliances for *preparing food* as are common with us, are rarely found among the inhabitants of Palestine. An American cookstove, with its modern conveniences, would be a novelty among

them. Aside from such vessels as frying pans, skillets, and coffee pots, cooking furniture is unknown. In place of stoves, bake ovens are common. Sometimes a bake oven consists simply of a plastered hole in the ground, into which fuel, consisting of grass, thorns, or small twigs is put, along with a few large pebbles to retain the heat. When hot embers have been formed, large thin cakes of dough are placed upon the sides and are quickly baked. Sometimes the oven is a little conical structure made of mud and smoothly plastered inside and out. An opening in one side serves as a door for putting in the fuel, and also for raking out the fire after the oven has been sufficiently heated. Then thin cakes of dough are placed on the sides within as before, until cooked. A convex griddle put over an open fire between a couple of stones, sometimes serves the purpose of an oven. By these simple contrivances various kinds of bread and cakes are made. As one sees the village women gathering up the coarse grass with which to heat their ovens, he is reminded of the Savior's remark: "But if God doth so clothe the grass in the field, which to-day is, and to-morrow is cast into the oven; how much more shall He clothe you, O ye, of little faith?" (Luke xii:28).

The dough for baking was made by mixing unbolted flour from wheat or barley, with water or

perhaps with milk. It was then kneaded with the hands. In Egypt the feet also were sometimes used for this purpose. When the kneading was completed, leaven was generally added. The dough was then rolled out into thin cakes for baking, as already indicated. The loaves bore some resemblance in general appearance, to round flat stones. There is an allusion to this in the narrative of our Lord's temptation, where the devil suggests that Jesus change the stones into bread, (Matt. iv:3). The term "bread" was often used to denote food in general. When Joseph's brethren had cast him into the pit, "they sat down to eat bread," (Gen. xxxvii:25). When Moses was in Midian, he was invited to "eat bread," (Ex. ii:20). The witch of Endor "set a morsel of bread" before Saul, (I Sam. xxviii:22).

Food for the family is usually served in large trays placed on low stands in the midst of the floor, those who partake sitting on the floor about it. During the New Testament period many Jews had evidently conformed to the custom of taking meals in a reclining attitude. The expression "sat at meat" which we often come upon, would be more correctly rendered "reclined at meat." For this purpose, beds or cushions were provided around the sides of the table within easy reach of the food. Usually those at the table rested on their left arms, the right arm being free. The feet ex-

tended outwardly. Thus we can understand how it was that while our Lord was at dinner a woman could come behind him and anoint his feet and wipe them with the hair of her head, (Luke vii:38). Reclining thus about the table, the back of each guest being turned to his next neighbor, his head would easily come in contact with his neighbor's breast. This explains how one of Jesus' disciples, whom He loved, was — when at the table — “reclining in Jesus' bosom,” (John xiii:23).

A very common family dish is made of pieces of meat stewed with vegetables. This is put into a dish from which each person at the table helps himself — not with knife and fork, but with his fingers. At the last supper Christ said: “He that dipped his hand with me in the dish, the same shall betray me,” (Matt. xxvi:23). Sometimes one makes a small scoop or spoon out of a piece of bread broken from the thin loaf at his side, with which he conveys the soft food to his mouth. This is called a “sop.” The animal food is so thoroughly cooked that it is readily separated by the fingers from the bone. It is a mark of friendly regard when the head of the house presents this sop, or a choice morsel of meat, to one of his guests. “So when he had dipped the sop, he taketh and giveth it to Judas, the son of Simon Iscariot. And after the sop, then entered Satan into him,” (John xiii:26, 27). “He then having received the sop

went out straightway: and it was night," (John xiii:30)—a very appropriate time for carrying out his treacherous purpose. How vividly the whole scene rises before our minds as we understand the various customs referred to in this brief account of the last meal of Jesus and the disciples!

The *dress* of the oriental differs greatly from that of Europeans. The girdle is one of the most useful articles of oriental costume, and frequently the most ornamental. With the long loose dress of orientals it becomes a necessity, since it would be difficult to walk or to run unless the folds in this loosely flowing dress were gathered up. Hence it was that Elijah "girded up his loins," (I Kings xviii:46), as a preparation for running before Ahab's chariot to Jezreel, after his contest with the priests of Baal at Mount Carmel. Thus the Israelites prepared for their exodus from Egypt after partaking of the passover on that last night: "And thus shall ye eat it: with your loins girded, your shoes on your feet, and your staff in your hand," (Ex. xii:11). They were to be ready to start at a moment's notice. Money, bread, and various small articles could be carried in the girdle. This explains the direction of Christ to the disciples: "Get you no gold, nor silver, nor brass in your purses," (Matt. x:9).

Sometimes garments were made of the thin

coarse hair of the camel, as is still the case among the Arabs. A rough outer garment of this material seems to have been characteristic of a prophet. John the Baptist, we read, "had his raiment of camel's hair, and a leathern girdle about his loins; and his food was locusts and wild honey," (Matt. iii:4). Locusts still constitute an article of food with many of the Bedouins on the frontiers of Palestine. They are salted, dried, and eaten with butter or wild honey. Locusts are considered a very inferior kind of food. The fact that this was John's diet is an evidence of the extreme poverty of Christ's forerunner, and of the destitution which he suffered by living in the wilderness far from the haunts of men.

Instead of shoes, the people of Palestine wear sandals. The sandal consists of a wooden or leathern sole which is fastened to the foot by thongs or latchets. These latchets as well as the sandals are frequently referred to in Scripture. John the Baptist in speaking of the one who was to come after him, says: "There cometh after me he that is mightier than I, the latchet of whose shoes (or sandals) I am not worthy to stoop down and unloose," (Mark i:7). It was the work of a servant to loosen this latchet, for upon entering a house the sandals are removed by a servant who takes care of them, and brings them again when needed. In the passage quoted, John expresses his deep hu-

mility and his consciousness of insignificance when contrasted with his Master. He felt himself to be unworthy to do for Christ even the work of a servant.

When the soil is dry and dusty and the feet are shod with sandals, frequent washing of the feet becomes not only a luxury but a necessity for comfort and health. In such circumstances it is as much a part of hospitality for a host to see that his guests' feet are washed as it is to provide them with food or to furnish them with a place for repose. This fact gives force to the beautiful symbolical action of our Lord as recorded in the thirteenth chapter of John. He "riseth from supper, and layeth aside his garments; and he took a towel, and girded himself. Then he poureth water into the basin, and began to wash the disciples' feet, and to wipe them with the towel wherewith he was girded," (John xiii:4, 5). Later He said: "If I then, the Lord and the Teacher, have washed your feet, ye also ought to wash one another's feet. For I have given you an example, that ye also should do as I have done to you," (John xiii:14, 15). So ought we to be ready and willing to engage in humble, even the most menial service for others whenever there is occasion. Nothing which it is necessary, or which duty calls us to do, is beneath the disciple of Christ. The Lord became the servant of all, and His example we are to follow.

Much misapprehension prevails as to the Scriptural references in numerous places to the matter of *dancing*. Among the Hebrews it was joined with sacred song, and was usually participated in by women only. When men danced, it was in companies separate from the women—promiscuous dancing not being practiced. If the Hebrew dances were like those of the modern Arabs, as is probable, we can understand how Miriam led in the dance, (Ex. xv:20). In general one leads off in the step and the others follow in exact imitation of all the varied movements which the leader makes. These movements are entirely extemporaneous, governed by no fixed rule, but varied at the pleasure of the leader. Dancing was usually performed by the Hebrews in the daytime and in the open air. It was an outward expression of tumultuous joy. When David returned after the slaughter of Goliath, the Israelitish women met him with dancing and singing, (I Sam. xviii:6). When the ark was brought home, “David danced before Jehovah with all his might,” (II Sam. vi:14). On several occasions God’s people were exhorted to praise the Lord in the dance, (Ps. cxlix:3 and, cl:4). This is the kind of dancing referred to when it is said there is “a time to dance,” (Eccl. iii:4). The dancing of men as practiced to-day in Palestine, is considerably less graceful than that of women, and neither is anything to

boast of. With the ideas prevailing there, it would be considered extremely immodest for the sexes to dance together. It would be well if, in this country, with reference to certain forms, at least, of dancing, a similar sentiment prevailed.

It is a rare thing in our land for men to embrace and kiss each other, at least in public. This custom of *kissing* is sometimes practiced among foreigners, but as a rule, men in this country rarely express their affection for each other in this way. It is not so, however, in oriental lands. There kissing is almost as common among the brethren as it is in this country among the sisters. Indeed, as seen over there by strangers, kissing seems to be confined to the men. So in Bible times: Jacob kissed his father Isaac, (Gen. xxvii:27). Esau embraced and kissed Jacob, (Gen. xxxiii:4). Joseph kissed all his brethren, (Gen. xlv:15). Israel embraced and kissed Joseph's sons, (Gen. xlviii:10). Aaron kissed Moses, (Ex. iv:27), and Moses kissed Jethro, (Ex. xviii:7). David and Jonathan kissed each other, (I Sam. xx:41). The father of the prodigal is represented as kissing him when he returned home, (Luke xv:20). The elders at Miletus fell on Paul's neck and kissed him, (Acts xx:37).

This subject of the manners and customs of Bible lands and the light they throw upon many

allusions in the Scriptures, has been barely touched upon. A few only out of many of these customs have been selected, but these are sufficient to show how helpful a knowledge of them is in understanding a large number of Scripture allusions, and in rendering Bible study interesting and attractive. A study of the subject more at length — and the literature of it is extensive — will prove richly rewarding.

CHAPTER IV.

CHRIST'S ILLUSTRATIONS

THE object of Christ's teaching was to produce conviction in the minds of His hearers and lead them to action. Men were alienated from God, disobedient, sinful. By the presentation of motives Christ sought to influence them to abandon their sins, return to God, and enter upon a life of obedience to Him. In thus seeking to persuade men, He employed various methods. Sometimes it was by direct assertion of the truth, sometimes by quotations from the Old Testament—showing their fulfilment in Himself, more frequently by the use of illustrations drawn from the objects, scenes, and experiences—real or imagined—of every-day life. One does not realize how constantly Christ employed the latter method, the wide range of His object lessons, or the pertinence and force of His comparisons, until his attention has been turned specially to them, until he has studied them in their settings, and noted the variety of truths which it was sought, by means of them to illumine. Hardly a single truth was set forth by Him which was not rendered more clear and ef-

fective by the use of illustration. Presented in the concrete, it gained easy access to men's minds, while by being translated into the dialect of their every-day life, it was not difficult of comprehension. So simple indeed, and so clear were His teachings, that the "common people," we read, "heard Him gladly." No one who had a heart to be interested, could fail to grasp His meaning.

The primary cause of the wide-spread interest in His teaching, was no doubt its subject-matter. Its topics were of vital concern to men — God, salvation, human conduct, eternal life — the most momentous themes which can engage human thought. Upon these subjects Christ's teachings were fresh, original, attractive, in marked contrast with the teachings to which the people had been accustomed from the scribes, the authorized teachers of the times, whose instructions were narrow, lifeless, repetitious, often frivolous. The latter were occupied mostly with such trivial things as the minutiae of ceremonial or levitical rites, the washing of cups and platters, the length of the fringes on their robes, the letter of the law. But Christ spoke from the heart, appealed to the heart, and His teachings carried the impression of authority. "He taught them as one having authority, and not as their scribes." "Never man spake like this man." "The people were astonished at His doctrine.

But while the subject-matter of Christ's teaching was such as to appeal strongly to popular interest, there was a peculiar charm also in His manner of presenting it. This charm was largely in its illustrative quality, and this contributed specially to its popularity. The Old Testament prophets employed this form of speech to some extent, but Christ went far beyond them. His mind seemed instinctively to perceive analogies in everything. Whatever He saw — whether the grass of the field, the birds of the air, the sheep and the shepherd, the fishers on the lake, the sports of children — He utilized to enforce some principle of moral conduct, or to render spiritual truth more luminous. Nothing which could in any way serve His purpose was so small or so commonplace as to escape His observation.

A study of these illustrations can hardly fail to be of profit. Directly or indirectly, they throw light upon the social and religious life of the times; they render many Biblical expressions more luminous; they bring out shades of meaning which are liable to be overlooked; and add no little interest to the Bible. We may divide these illustrations into two general classes, first, those drawn from actual facts or analogies; second, those based upon imaginary incidents or the parables.

light; and what ye hear in the ear, proclaim upon the housetops," (Matt. x:27).

Among the simple furnishings of every poor man's home were to be found a bed, a lamp, and a measure. The bed was a raised couch surrounding the room, boarded down in front, but open at either end. In the daytime a lamp could easily be placed underneath it, out of the way. At night it would be lighted and placed on a stand provided for the purpose. The bushel was a measure holding about a peck. Turned upside down it could be used as a seat. If necessary a lamp could be concealed under it in the daytime. When our Lord would teach His followers that they were not to receive the light and blessings of the gospel for their own sake merely, but were under obligation to impart them to others, He referred by way of illustration to the folly of putting a lighted lamp, whose mission was to give light to all, under a bushel or bed. "Neither do men light a lamp, and put it under the bushel, but on the stand; and it shineth unto all that are in the house. Even so let your light shine before men; that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father who is in heaven," (Matt. v:15, 16). "And he said unto them, Is the lamp brought to be put under the bushel, or under the bed, and not to be put on the stand?" (Mark iv:21).

The humility of mind which must characterize

Christ's followers if they would receive the Spirit of God, and which was the condition of gaining insight into spiritual things, was illustrated by this well-known quality of little children. "And he called to him a little child, and set him in the midst of them, and said, Verily I say unto you, Except ye turn, and become as little children, ye shall in no wise enter into the kingdom of heaven. Whosoever therefore shall humble himself as this little child, the same is the greatest in the kingdom of heaven," (Matt. xviii:2-4). "I thank thee, O Father, Lord of heaven and earth, that thou didst hide these things from the wise and understanding, and didst reveal them unto babes," (Luke x:21).

Unlike John the Baptist, Christ associated with men and shared in their social life. Frequently He visited at the house of Mary and Martha in Bethany; He was a guest at the marriage festival at Cana, and we read of His accepting invitations to other feasts from time to time. Many things which He observed at these gatherings, or in social life in general, furnished Him illustrations. The gospel with its privileges was represented as a feast. Invitations to it were widely extended. As festival garments were presented to guests, so in order to acceptance at the gospel board, men must put on the garment of righteousness which is furnished in Christ. "A certain man made a great supper; and he bade many: and he sent forth his servant

at supper time to say to them that were bidden, Come; for all things are now ready," (Luke xiv:16, 17). "But when the king came in to behold the guests, he saw there a man which had not on a wedding-garment: and he saith unto him, Friend, how camest thou in hither, not having a wedding-garment?" (Matt. xxii:11, 12).

2. The various *occupations and trades* of the Jews — agricultural and pastoral, fishing, building, mercantile pursuits, and various business relations — suggested many illustrations and analogies for the discourses of Christ.

The cultivation of the vine was common in Palestine. Christ speaks of Himself as a vine, and of His people as the branches. The dependence of the branches upon the vine for nourishment was used to indicate the closeness of the union between Himself and His followers. The pruning of the vine is necessary to its fruitfulness. So is the discipline of trial essential to spiritual fruit-bearing. "I am the true vine, and my Father is the husbandman." "Abide in me, and I in you. As the branch cannot bear fruit of itself, except it abide in the vine; so neither can ye, except ye abide in me. I am the vine, ye are the branches: He that abideth in me, and I in him, the same beareth much fruit; for apart from me ye can do nothing," (John xv:1, 4, 5). "Every branch in me that beareth not fruit, he taketh it away: and every branch that

beareth fruit, he cleanseth it, that it may bear more fruit," (John xv:2).

So light was the plow which the Jews used for cultivating the soil, that unless the plowman gave his whole attention to his work, it was liable to be thrown out of the furrow. To look about or behind was to endanger one's work. Would one be successful in the Christian life, one must devote his entire attention to it. To look back toward the world is at one's peril. "But Jesus said unto him, 'No man, having put his hand to the plow, and looking back, is fit for the kingdom of God,'" (Luke ix:62).

The patriarchs had all been shepherds. At the time of our Lord's birth, shepherds were watching over their flocks by night in the little plain east of Bethlehem. The people were so familiar with pastoral life that illustrations and analogies from this source would readily be appreciated. Christ represents Himself as the shepherd of the people. He watches over them as shepherds watch over their flocks. He cares for them, leads them, protects them, seeks after the strayed and lost, even lays down His life in their behalf. "I am the good shepherd: the good shepherd layeth down his life for the sheep," (John x:11). "The sheep hear his voice: and he calleth his own sheep by name, and leadeth them out. When he hath put forth all his own, he goeth before them, and the sheep follow

him: for they know his voice. And a stranger will they not follow, but will flee from him: for they know not the voice of strangers," (John x:3-5). "How think ye? if any man have a hundred sheep, and one of them be gone astray, doth he not leave the ninety and nine, and go unto the mountains, and seek that which goeth astray? And if so be that he find it, verily I say unto you, he rejoiceth over it more than over the ninety and nine which have not gone astray," (Matt. xviii:12, 13).

In calling His disciples, Christ referred to the occupation of fishermen which was common about the shores of Galilee. In like manner He would make them fishers of men. The same qualities of patience and tact which were necessary in catching fish, would be essential in the higher calling of winning men for the kingdom. Seeing Peter and Andrew, casting a net into the sea one day, he said to them, "Come ye after me, and I will make ye fishers of men." Walking a little farther along on the shore, he saw James and John in the boat with their father, mending their nets, and he called them. As Peter and Andrew had done, so they "straightway left their nets and followed him," (Matt. iv:18-22).

3. Christ drew very largely upon *nature* for illustrations with which to enrich His teaching. The seasons of the year and the heavenly bodies are referred to in enforcing important lessons. He him-

self is symbolized by the sun. "I am the light of the world," (John viii:12). "Ye are the light of the world," (Matt. v:14). "Then shall the righteous shine forth as the sun in the kingdom of their Father," (Matt. xiii:43). "And pray ye that your flight (at the destruction of the Holy City) be not in the winter," (Matt. xxiv:20).

Among the various phenomena of nature to which Christ referred, were the laws of the wind, which we cannot see, but the effects of which reveal its power. So in the movements of the Spirit. "The wind bloweth where it will, and thou hearest the voice thereof, but knowest not whence it cometh, and whether it goeth: so is every one that is born of the Spirit," (John iii:8).

Similarly in regard to the signs of the times. The people were not slow to observe signs of a change in the weather, but they seemed very obtuse when it came to discerning spiritual signs. The south wind which blew from the desert, always brought heat. Clouds from the west — from the Mediterranean — foretokened rain. "And he said to the multitudes also, When ye see a cloud rising in the west, straightway ye say, There cometh a shower; and so it cometh to pass. And when ye see a south wind blowing, ye say, There will be a scorching heat; and it cometh to pass. Ye hypocrites, ye know how to interpret the face of the earth and the heaven; but how is it that ye know

not how to interpret this time?" (Luke xii: 54-56). "When it is evening, ye say, It will be fair weather: for the heaven is red. And in the morning, It will be foul weather to-day: for the heaven is red and lowring. Ye know how to discern the face of the heaven; but ye cannot discern the signs of the times," (Matt. xvi:2, 3).

The dried grass which is used in heating the oven, and the lily of the field, were made to yield lessons of the providential care of God. If He clothes these with beauty, notwithstanding their short life, so that Solomon in all his glory, could not, in his apparel, be compared with the lily, much more may He be expected to provide for the needs of His own children. "And why are ye anxious concerning raiment? Consider the lilies of the field, how they grow; they toil not neither do they spin: yet I say unto you, that even Solomon in all his glory was not arrayed like one of these. But if God doth so clothe the grass of the field, which to-day is, and to-morrow is cast into the oven, shall he not much more clothe you, O ye of little faith?" (Matt. vi:28-30). Lessons of God's providential care are also drawn from the birds, and from His numbering the hairs of our heads. "Behold the birds of the heaven, that they sow not, neither do they reap, nor gather into barns; and your heavenly Father feedeth them. Are not ye of much more value than they?" (Matt. vi:26). "Are

not two sparrows sold for a penny? and not one of them shall fall on the ground without your Father: but the very hairs of your head are all numbered. Fear not therefore; ye are of more value than many sparrows," (Matt. x:29-31). "Consider the ravens, that they sow not, neither reap; which have no store-chamber nor barn; and God feedeth them: of how much more value are ye than the birds! And which of you by being anxious can add a cubit unto the measure of his life? If ye then are not able to do even that which is least, why are ye anxious concerning the rest?" (Luke xii:24-26). The hen's care for her brood of chickens illustrates Christ's tender love for the people of Jerusalem, indeed for all His children. "How often would I have gathered thy children together, even as a hen gathereth her chickens under her wings," (Matt. xxiii:37).

4. The *religious habits* of the Jews with their scrupulous observance of all ceremonial requirements, furnished many effective illustrations to our Lord.

When He would point out the folly of external cleansing while the heart remains unchanged and impure, He refers to the ceremonial washing of hands before eating and of cups and pots and brazen vessels, as in Mark. "For the Pharisees, and all the Jews, except they wash their hands diligently, eat not, holding the tradition of the elders; and

when they come from the market-place, except they bathe themselves, they eat not; and many other things there are, which they have received to hold, washings of cups, and pots, and brazen vessels," (Mark vii:3, 4). Christ however said, "To eat with unwashen hands defileth not the man," (Matt. xv:20). The things which did defile were the things which came out of the heart, "evil thoughts, murders, adulteries, fornications, thefts, false witness, railings: these are the things which defile the man," (Matt. xv:19, 20). "Woe unto you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! for ye cleanse the outside of the cup and of the platter, but within they are full from extortion and excess. Thou blind Pharisee, cleanse first the inside of the cup and of the platter, that the outside thereof may become clean also," (Matt. xxiii:25, 26). Again, and still more severely he says, "Woe unto you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! for ye are like unto whited sepulchres, which outwardly appear beautiful, but inwardly are full of dead men's bones, and of all uncleanness. Even so ye also outwardly appear righteous unto men, but inwardly ye are full of hypocrisy and iniquity," (Matt. xxiii:27, 28).

Christ wrought works of mercy on the Sabbath. The Jews, in their punctiliousness for the letter of the law, criticized His course in so doing. In pointing out to them their inconsistency, Christ re-

fers to the ox and the ass, to the care their owners take of them, even on the Sabbath. "Doth not each one of you on the Sabbath loose his ox or his ass from the stall, and lead him away to watering?" (Luke xiii:15). "And he said unto them, Which of ye shall have an ass or an ox fallen into a well, and will not straightway draw him up on a Sabbath day?" (Luke xiv:5). In Matthew (xii:11) the reference is to a sheep fallen into a pit: "How much then is a man of more value than a sheep! Wherefore it is lawful to do good on the Sabbath day," (Matt. xii:12).

True almsgiving was prompted by an unselfish love for less favored fellow men. It was not to be heralded, nor to be prompted by the love of praise. Its merit lay in the motive, and in the self-sacrifice involved in it. Even the smallest, humblest gifts, prompted by love, counted for more in the sight of God than large gifts which involved no sacrifice. Fasting, also, which was done openly, in order to gain the praise of men, was not acceptable to God. "When therefore thou doest alms, sound not a trumpet before thee, as the hypocrites do in the synagogues and in the streets, that they may have glory of men. Verily I say unto you, They have received their reward. But when thou doest alms, let not thy left hand know what thy right hand doeth: that thine alms may be in secret: and thy Father who seeth in secret shall recompense thee,"

(Matt. vi:2-4). "Moreover when ye fast, be not, as the hypocrites, of a sad countenance: for they disfigure their faces, that they may be seen of men to fast. Verily I say unto you, They have received their reward. But thou, when thou fastest, anoint thy head, and wash thy face; that thou be not seen of men to fast, but of thy Father who is in secret: and thy Father, who seeth in secret, shall recompense thee," (Matt. vi:16-18).

5. Many of Christ's illustrations are of a *miscellaneous* character.

The uncertainty of Christ's second coming is illustrated by the different watches of the night. The first, or the evening watch, was from six to nine o'clock p. m.; the second, the midnight watch, from nine o'clock to twelve; the third, the cock crow watch, from twelve to three a. m.; and the morning watch from three o'clock to six. "Watch therefore: for ye know not when the lord of the house cometh, whether at even, or at midnight, or at cock-crowing, or in the morning; lest coming suddenly he find you sleeping. And what I say unto you I say unto all, Watch," (Mark xiii:35-37).

Christ used the Hebrew expression for man's physical nature, "flesh and blood," to denote human agency. "And Simon Peter answered and said, Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God. And Jesus answered and said unto him, Blessed art thou, Simon Bar-Jonah: for flesh and

blood hath not revealed it unto thee, but my Father who is in heaven," (Matt. xvi:16, 17).

Sometimes Christ uses various organs of the body by way of illustration or analogy, the eye to symbolize conscience, the eye and the ear as symbols of spiritual perception. "The lamp of the body is the eye: if therefore thine eye be single, thy whole body shall be full of light. But if thine eye be evil, thy whole body shall be full of darkness. If therefore the light that is in thee be darkness, how great is the darkness!" (Matt. vi:22, 23). "But blessed are your eyes, for they see; and your ears, for they hear," (Matt. xiii:16).

Hunger and thirst are made to symbolize the cravings of the soul for God and divine things. Bread is used to typify Christ, and water the satisfying character of the Christian religion in quenching spiritual thirst. "Blessed are they that hunger and thirst after righteousness: for they shall be filled," (Matt. v:6). "Jesus said unto them, I am the bread of life," (John vi:35). "Whosoever drinketh of the water that I shall give him, shall never thirst," (John iv:14).

Some of Christ's illustrations were drawn from Old Testament incidents. The fact that greater responsibility rests upon those who have received the light and knowledge of the gospel than upon those who lived under the old dispensation, is brought out by reference to the overthrow of Sodom

and Gomorrah. "Verily I say unto you, It shall be more tolerable for the land of Sodom and Gomorrah in the day of judgment, than for that city," (which would not receive the apostles and the gospel message) (Matt. x:15).

Christ's preëxistence is affirmed in the expression, "Verily, verily, I say unto you, Before Abraham was born, I am," (John viii:58).

The crucifixion of Christ by which the work was completed which opened to men a way of pardon, was foreshadowed in the lifting up of the brazen serpent on a pole in the wilderness. "And as Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, even so must the Son of man be lifted up; that whosoever believeth may in him have eternal life," (John iii:14).

From the examples which have been given — selections from a great variety of illustrations found in the teachings of Christ — it is easy to see how much they added to the vividness and force of those teachings, and how much they also add to our interest in them.

II.

A prominent form of Christ's illustrations is to be found in His parables, or those which were based upon imaginary though probable incidents. The study of these introduces us to a rich and inviting

field of investigation. There are not a few instances of parabolic teachings in the Old Testament. Some of them are very beautiful, as, for example, the story of the little ewe lamb by which the prophet Nathan sought to point out to David his sin in coveting the wife of Uriah the Hittite, (II Sam. xii:1-7); Isaiah's song of the well-beloved in regard to his vineyard, (Isa. v:1-7); and Ezekiel's vision of the valley of dry bones, (Ezek. xxxvii:1-14). But Christ's use of this form of teaching was unique and impressive, while in quality His parables were immeasurably superior to any, so far as we know, which were ever uttered. Though suggested by simple and familiar, sometimes homely objects, they were employed to illustrate the highest spiritual truth.

As commonly used, a parable was a narrative, or a story, real or probable, employed as a means of conveying spiritual lessons. A little girl's definition, "an earthly story with a heavenly meaning," is not far from the truth. By this means, the attention of men was arrested. That grown people as well as children are interested in stories is plain from the hush which always comes over an audience when a public speaker relates an incident. Thus Christ, in His use of parables, availed himself of one of the strongest principles of human nature. In this way also, the truth was rendered so clear as usually to be obvious at once, without argument,

or further explanation. The truth, thus made plain, was easily retained in people's minds, while the more they reflected upon the parable, or the form in which it came to them, the clearer its meaning became.

The parable also served the purpose of a veil, so that the "mysteries of the kingdom" were only gradually disclosed, even to those who, through it, saw the outlines of the picture which had been drawn for them. Those who were in sympathy with Christ and His truth, would catch the meaning the soonest, at least their interest would be so awakened as to lead to further inquiry afterward, while the significance of the parable would only gradually dawn upon the minds of those who were prejudiced against it. By this means the hostility of the latter would be stayed. For this reason the parable has been compared to the pillar of cloud and fire, which was bright on the side toward the children of Israel, but dark on the side toward the hostile Egyptians. To the open and receptive mind, the parable disclosed the hidden power and beauty of spiritual truth, while the opposite result was produced upon the mind of such as were prejudiced and hardened against it.

As to the interpretation of the parables, it is important to remember that the object in each case was to enforce some one main truth only. While in some cases the minor features and details of the

parable may have had significance, usually they were added to render the picture more vivid. This main truth is generally made apparent from the circumstances, or from the manner in which the parable was introduced. Sometimes the gospel writer prefaces the parable in a way to point its meaning, or a supplementary word helps to make it clear.

Christ's parables were of different kinds. Some were designed to teach doctrine, others were ethical in their application, and some were prophetic. But so varied were they both in topics and in the occasions which called them out, that attempts to classify them have not been entirely satisfactory. Some belonged to the early part of Christ's ministry, some to the intermediate, more to the latter part of it. Matthew and Luke have recorded more of Christ's parables than Mark; John has given none at all.

In order more fully to indicate the wealth of spiritual truth which is contained in the parable, and the continued timeliness of that truth in its application to the needs of the present day, as well as to emphasize the importance of the concrete method of presenting truth to render it the most highly effective, we may refer with profit to a few of the parables in detail.

The thirteenth chapter of Matthew contains a cluster of seven parables, which have been called

the parables of the kingdom. It is not necessary to suppose that they were all given at the same time, although they may have been. Each was designed to set forth and illustrate some phase of the kingdom of heaven. It has been suggested that this chapter may have been an illustrative appendix to the Sermon on the Mount.

The parable of the sower was the first of the parables comprising this group, the first indeed of Christ's parables of which we have record. It was designed to illustrate the general effect of preaching the gospel. The kingdom of heaven was to come, not by power, as most of the Jews thought, but by means of a divine message and divine truths which would gradually do their work in the minds and lives of men. The results of this message would always and everywhere depend upon the attitude of those who heard it, as the growth of the seed depends upon the quality of the soil which receives it.

The scene of the parable was the shore of Galilee, somewhere near Capernaum. Christ was teaching by the seaside. Being pressed by a crowd of people, He betook Himself, for greater freedom of action, to a boat which was moored there, and caused it to be pushed out a little distance from the shore. From this unique pulpit He addressed the multitude which lined the beach. The parable which He employed presented a picture of what

might at any time occur. Possibly it was suggested by the sight of a husbandman in a field near by. A sower went forth from his home in the village to his fields in the country to sow. The fields then, as in many parts of Palestine to-day, were unfenced, their boundaries being marked by stones set up for the purpose. Nor were there fenced highways in the land, such as those to which we are accustomed. The roadways of Palestine, then, as for the most part now, were footpaths, which ran through or by the side of the fields, and were trodden hard by the constant passing of men and beasts. The soil, too, of these fields, was often of a mixed quality, so that its productiveness varied greatly.

Some of the seed scattered by the sower, the Savior says, fell upon the wayside, i. e. upon the hard footpaths running through the fields. The seed, thus exposed, would soon be picked up by the birds that were on the watch for it. Other seed fell upon stony ground, or, more accurately, where there was but a thin layer of soil upon the hard underlying rock. Such seed might take root and spring up, but with no depth of soil to nourish it, and a scorching sun beating upon it, it would soon wither and die. Other seed, falling among thorns, or rather in soil in which thorn roots abounded, would be choked before maturing by the rapid and dense growth of the thorns. But that portion of the seed which fell upon good soil — soil which was mellow

and well prepared for its reception — would bring forth abundantly, the yield depending upon the varying fertility of the field. In some cases it would be thirty, in others sixty, in others still, even one hundred fold. In every instance the results would correspond with the character of the soil. The lesson of the parable is plain. Christ Himself gave the interpretation. The seed is the word of God. The soil is human hearts. This word, by means of which Christ's earthly kingdom was to be established, was dependent for results upon the manner in which it was received. The different degrees of preparation for receiving it are represented by the different kinds of soil. The wayside hearer is the one who is careless, indifferent, inattentive. He hears the word, but it soon passes from his mind. "Then cometh the evil one and snatches away that which hath been sown in his heart." The rocky ground hearer is the superficial, impulsive hearer. His piety does not endure because it has no depth. When the testing time comes it soon gives way. "When tribulation or persecution arises because of the word, he stumblenth." The thorny ground hearer is the one in whom "the care of the world, and the deceitfulness of riches, choke the word and he becometh unfruitful." His efforts to serve God with a divided heart do not succeed. But the good ground hearer is the one whose heart is fully responsive to the truth,

who allows the word to do its perfect work within him, and who thus becomes fruitful in graces of character and in service for the kingdom. In some cases the results are larger, in others smaller, but they all depend upon the capacity and receptivity of the hearer.

In other places stress is laid upon the character of the preacher and the nature of his message. Here the responsibility of the hearer for the manner in which he receives the Word is emphasized. No matter how faithful the preaching of the Word may be, unless it be received into good and honest hearts it is of no avail. After the preacher has done his best, the responsibility is shifted from him to those who have heard him. The same need exists to-day, as then, for the injunction, "Take heed, therefore, how ye hear."

The six parables of the Kingdom immediately following that of the sower, seem to be in pairs or couplets. Each member of the pair brings out a truth complementary to that set forth in the other. In the parable of the tares, for instance, the mixture in the kingdom of evil with good is illustrated, while in that of the dragnet the method by which the evil and the good are finally to be separated is made prominent. The couplet of the hidden treasure and the pearl of great price illustrates the acceptance of the gospel by the individual believer.

In the one case the man comes unexpectedly upon it, as upon hidden treasure; in the other the rare pearl is deliberately sought for. In either case when the value of that which has been discovered is recognized, no sacrifice is regarded too great to secure it. So to-day let any one really appreciate the nature of the gospel and the transcendent blessings which it is designed to impart, he will be ready to sacrifice anything in order to possess it. The connection between the parable of the mustard and the leaven, is evident. Both relate to the future of the kingdom; set forth its continued and steady progress; but the one illustrates it in its external aspects, the other in its development from within. Small and insignificant in its beginnings, it will ultimately expand so as completely to fill the earth. Both parables were designed to encourage the disciples in the work upon which they had entered.

The parable of the Great Supper, (Luke xiv: 16-24), was called forth by a remark at the table to which Christ and others had been invited, by one of the chief Pharisees. The remark had disclosed the superficial ideas which prevailed among many as to the nature of the kingdom of God and the conditions of receiving its blessings. The fact of descent from Abraham was assumed to be sufficient to entitle one to its privileges. The necessity of moral and spiritual preparation, involving a radi-

cal change of heart and life, seems not to have entered the Jewish mind. The parable was designed to point out the real nature of the kingdom, and the danger — to all who failed to fulfil the conditions of membership in it — of entirely missing its blessings. It was primarily a lesson of warning to the proud leaders of the people.

A wealthy and prominent citizen of a great city, said Christ, made preparations for a magnificent feast. After the custom of the country, especially with men of rank, two calls were sent out, the first to convey the invitations, the second, to remind those who had been invited that all things were ready. The latter call signified that they were to suspend whatever occupation they were at the time engaged in, and go at once to the feast. Although the invitation was of such a character and from such a source that none were at liberty to ignore it, "they all with one consent," or as if by a common impulse, "began to make excuse." These excuses were varied according to the things which were occupying the persons whose presence at the feast had been desired. Not unnaturally the host was indignant that his courtesy was so lightly esteemed, whereupon he sent his servant into the streets and lanes of the city to bring in to the feast the poor, the maimed, the halt, and the blind. These not being sufficient to fill the table, he sent out again, this time to the highways and hedges outside the city, to

bring in all whom he could find, adding — and in this we have the pith of the story — “I say unto you that none of those men who were bidden, shall taste of my supper.” In this way the table was filled. Those who had been first invited were left out altogether.

The supper is a figure of the blessings intended for men in the gospel — pardon, peace of conscience, help in times of need, the hope of the life to come. The Jewish people were first of all invited, but the invitation was ignored by their leaders. The gospel blessings were then offered to the publicans and sinners whom the Pharisees despised. Later still the Gentiles were included. In this way the feast was provided with guests. But those who in their pride and impenitence had refused the invitation, were excluded. The parable taught a lesson of judgment upon the chosen nation, as represented by its officials. The degraded outcasts of the people, together with the Gentiles, were received into the kingdom before them.

But the parable teaches a lesson of importance beyond that intended for the Jewish officials. In a broader sense the invitation to the gospel feast is for all in whose hearing it is proclaimed. Such an invitation, involving men's spiritual and eternal welfare, is not one to be lightly esteemed. It is paramount to a command. The practical question is as to what shall be done with it. As those who

in the parable were first invited began with one accord to make excuse, so the disposition of many people is to do the same to-day. As then, so now, the various excuses offered are but makeshifts. They are not sincere. Not that the things then alleged in excuse — the marrying of a wife, the examination of a piece of real estate, the testing of five yoke of oxen which had been purchased — or many of those presented now, are in themselves improper or wrong, but that there is nothing to be compared in importance with the invitation to the feast, and nothing should be allowed to stand in the way of its acceptance. The fact that it is not accepted shows how little it is appreciated, and discloses the indifference and sin of those who decline it. That which is symbolized by the feast is the supreme good, and those who refuse it are giving the supreme place in their hearts to something else. It is a serious responsibility to receive an invitation to the gospel feast, and then refuse to accept it. Yet notwithstanding the refusal of many, the parable makes it plain that God's tables will be filled at last. The saved may be in the minority now, but it will not always be so. Eventually they will vastly outnumber the unsaved. The time will come when under the sweetly compelling influences of God's Spirit, the nations will flock to the gospel feast. Whether or not we individually accept the invitation, God's purposes will not be defeated.

We owe the three parables of the fifteenth chapter of Luke — of the lost sheep, the lost coin, the prodigal son — to a sneering remark of the scribes and Pharisees in view of the graciousness of Christ's reception of the outcasts and sinners who were being attracted to His preaching. Numerous suggestive lessons appear upon the face of these parables, apart from their connections, but it is only in the light of the circumstances which called them out and the particular object which Christ had in view in giving them, that their full significance appears.

There seems at this time to have been a general movement of the less reputable classes toward Christ and His preaching. "Now all the publicans and sinners were drawing near unto him to hear him," (Luke xv:1). Nor is it difficult to account for this, since, instead of despising them as did the haughty, self-righteous Pharisees, Christ sought to do them good, to awaken their self-respect, to inspire them with new hopes, especially to persuade them to abandon their old ways and to enter upon a new life. They seemed to appreciate and were responding to His appeals, and in order to render His efforts in their behalf the more effective, He mingled with them freely, even going so far as sometimes to eat with them. But, strange to say, the scribes and Pharisees, who had themselves rejected him and his message, were greatly scandalized by his course, and made it an added reason for antag-

onizing him. With a sneer they said: "This man receiveth sinners and eateth with them." Such a spirit on their part was not to go unrebuked, and in order to show them how entirely out of sympathy they were with the attitude of the heavenly Father toward the outcasts and the lost, Christ spoke the three parables of this chapter. While their general purport is the same, each one also emphasizes some phase in particular of the truth which He was presenting.

The first is the parable of the *Lost Sheep*. Like those which follow, it was addressed to these carping critics. Christ asks them to put themselves in the place of the owner of a flock of a hundred sheep, one of which has strayed away. Which one of you, he says, would not, in such circumstances, leave the ninety and nine sheep untended in the wilderness, and go after the lost one until he found it? "And when he hath found it, he layeth it on his shoulders rejoicing. And when he cometh home, he calleth together his friends and his neighbors, saying unto them, Rejoice with me, for I have found my sheep which was lost."

The point of the parable is this, that if the recovery of a single lost sheep was an event so joyous as to warrant the owner of it in calling neighbors and friends together to rejoice with him — and the parable was true to the experience of shepherds at that time — much more was the recovery of a lost

soul (as of one of these publicans and sinners for instance) a cause of rejoicing to God. If they, the scribes and Pharisees, did not share in that joy, it only showed how entirely out of harmony they were with the spirit and purpose of the heavenly Father. Furthermore, rather than to criticize and complain, they ought to have sympathized with and joined Him in His efforts to rescue these sinful and lost men who were now showing signs of repentance. "I say unto you," He concludes, "that even so there shall be joy in heaven over one sinner that repenteth, more than over ninety and nine righteous persons who need no repentance,"—or who thought they needed none, like the scribes and Pharisees. It was a stinging rebuke to the pride, the exclusiveness, the self-righteousness of these Jewish officials, and at the same time a most effective vindication of Himself.

The second parable, that of the *Lost Coin*, follows immediately upon the first. Like that, it is thoroughly true to eastern life. The heirlooms of a Syrian woman consist, for the most part, of pieces of money, which are commonly worn in the hair. If one should fall out of its place to the floor—which often consisted of bare earth only, or perhaps covered with rushes which would naturally collect a large amount of dust and debris—it could not be recovered without a search, especially as windows were few and the light within was dim. When at

length, after lighting a lamp and sweeping the house, the coin was found, it would be quite natural for the woman who had lost it to call in her female friends to rejoice with her. This is the Scripture language as Christ gave it: "Or what woman having ten pieces of silver, if she lose one piece, doth not light a lamp and sweep the house and seek diligently until she find it? And when she hath found it, she calleth together her friends and neighbors, saying, Rejoice with me for I have found the piece which I had lost. Even so, I say unto you, there is joy in the presence of the angels of God over one sinner that repenteth," (Luke xv:8-10).

The lesson of this parable plainly is, in the main, the same as that of the parable of the lost sheep — that if a woman has such gladness over the finding of a lost piece of money, much more ought all right-minded persons to rejoice over the recovery of lost sinners. And yet in Christ's soul-saving work, not only did these scribes and Pharisees refuse to sympathize with Him and rejoice over any success He might achieve, they even criticized Him for what He was doing.

We come now to the third parable, that of the *Prodigal Son*. It is a gem of beauty. It has the form of a narrative, an imaginary incident, yet true to life. It pictures out what has been essentially the experience of many young men in all ages.

The parable is a realistic narrative of a young man, the younger of two sons, who, chafing under the restraints of the parental roof, and desirous of having his own way, of being independent, took that portion of his father's property which would eventually have fallen to him by inheritance, and started to make his way in the world. The father seeing this disposition in his son, had consented to this premature division of his possessions. The young man journeyed, we read, into a far country. Here he was free to follow the bent of his own will. Prodigal of his resources, he soon "wasted his substance with riotous living." "And when he had spent all," the story continues, "there arose a mighty famine in that country; and he began to be in want." But there was no one to help him, or to relieve his necessities. At length, in his wretchedness, he hired himself out to one of the citizens of that country, who sent him into the fields to feed swine — in the eye of a Jew, the most humiliating of all occupations. But so keen was his want, that he would gladly have fed upon the "husks" — the coarse fruit of the carob-tree — which the swine did eat, yet no one gave him even this. Then in his humiliation and distress, he "came to himself," thought of the home he had left and the abundance there, how much better the hired servants of his father fared than he in his present circumstances. He saw the folly of his course, was filled with shame

and remorse. Thereupon he resolved to return, even in his poverty and rags, to the home he had left, make confession of his sins, and beg to be taken back; if necessary, take the place of a servant.

So he arose and started on the homeward journey. Even while he was yet a great way off, his father, who had long been waiting and praying for his son's return, anticipating his coming, saw him in the distance, ran toward him, and welcomed him with a passionate love which did not permit the son to complete his confession. He gave directions that the best robe the house afforded should be put upon him in place of his rags, that the signet ring should be put upon his finger, and shoes upon his feet, and that the fatted calf should be killed. "Let us eat, and make merry," he said, "for this my son was dead, and is alive again; he was lost, and is found." And they began to be merry in honor of that son's return.

Now the elder son appears upon the scene. Returning from his toil in the field, hearing the sound of music and dancing and learning the cause of it, he is filled with jealousy and anger, and will not go in. To his father's entreaties he replies: "Lo, these many years do I serve thee, and I never transgressed a commandment of thine; and yet thou never gavest me a kid, that I might make merry with my friends: but when this thy son came, which

hath devoured thy living with harlots, thou killedst for him the fatted calf." The kind-hearted father meets all this complaint of the elder son in the same loving spirit which he had manifested toward the younger son. He reminds him of the place he had always held in the home; everything in it belonged to him, would eventually fall to him; but over the younger son, it was fitting to rejoice. His course had been wrong, and he had suffered the consequences of his sins, but now he had returned in penitence and great humility. "It was meet to make merry and be glad: for this thy brother was dead, and is alive again; and was lost, and is found."

This parable repeats the lesson of the two parables preceding in its rebuke of the attitude and spirit of the scribes and Pharisees, and yet in a broader way. If those parables showed them how they ought to have acted, this one holds the mirror before them, showing — in the person of the unloving, unbrotherly spirit of the elder son — how they actually were acting. As he, instead of rejoicing over the repentance and recovery of his wayward brother, was even jealous because no special consideration — although all his life he had been faithful and obedient — had been shown to himself, while the highest honor had been reserved for this profligate brother who had brought disgrace upon the family — so they, the scribes and Pharisees, instead of rejoicing over the repentant spirit of these

publicans and sinners as they ought to have done, were even jealous because of the slight consideration which they, who had always — in their own opinion — been righteous and respectable, were receiving from the great Teacher.

Thus we see how the main lesson of this as well as of the preceding parables — that of a scathing rebuke of the cold, proud, exclusive, heartless scribes and Pharisees — is brought out distinctly and forcibly in the light of the circumstances which called them forth.

But this rebuke by no means exhausts the significance of the parable. No parable indeed, is better adapted to impress practical lessons of universal application. One of these lessons is that of the forgiving love of God, as represented by the attitude of the father toward his erring but now penitent son — an encouragement to every repentant sinner. The degradation and woe, to the awful bondage to which sin leads, together with the experience within the soul when the sinner really comes to himself, resolves to turn to God, to confess his sin and seek forgiveness, are also depicted. The analogy seems perfect. It is to be remembered, however, that the parable attempts to portray only the human side of the sinner's experience. Elsewhere we learn that it is the Holy Spirit which prompts the sinner to turn from his evil ways and to seek God.

From the parables which have now been mentioned, it is evident how rich is the mine of spiritual truth to which their study introduces the Bible student, how practical and helpful the character of the truth they contain, and how simply, yet affectionately, Christ set it forth. The adaptedness, also, of the parables to the present time and present needs, is made very evident. The value, too, of illustration, especially such as is drawn from the scenes, incidents, and experiences, of daily life, or from the Bible itself — which is full of illustrative material — is distinctly emphasized. Christ's concrete method of presenting truth may well be studied by those who are called to set it forth to-day.

CHAPTER V.

LIGHT FROM THE MONUMENTS

WE have seen what light is thrown upon the Scriptures by a knowledge of geography, and the topography of the Holy Land; by an acquaintance with the manners and customs of the people, which have not materially changed since patriarchal times; by an understanding of the illustrations in which the Bible abounds, particularly those employed by the Great Teacher. All these sources of information serve as sidelights to render the pages of the sacred Word more luminous, its scenes more vivid, its characters and events more real. By means of them, one's interest in reading and studying the Scriptures is greatly enhanced.

But there is another line of study in this connection — made possible by the investigations and discoveries of recent years — which cannot fail to yield profitable returns to one who is interested in the Bible. It is that which pertains to the monuments and to the light which they throw upon portions of the sacred Word. During the last half century especially, men have gone forth with pick and spade and have unearthed vast ruins and dis-

covered extended records of the past in the old empires of Egypt, Mesopotamia and Babylonia. By this means rich mines of information have been opened, not alone with reference to the history of these lands themselves, but also to that of the countries with which they were brought into political or other relations. Hieroglyphic, cuneiform, and other inscriptions upon monuments, temple walls, tablets of clay, cylinders of stone, even upon mountain sides, made centuries, even millenniums ago, have been deciphered; sculptured scenes in bas-relief and wall paintings have been interpreted, and floods of light thrown upon the life and character of historic personages and peoples, and upon the movements and conquests of their armies. More than this, through incidental allusions to persons, places, and events mentioned in the Scriptures, important Biblical statements have been confirmed, and obscure or meager passages have been cleared up or supplemented. The study of these discoveries — material for which is constantly accumulating — is most interesting, even fascinating. Not that the information thus gained is infallibly reliable, least of all that it is to be regarded as more trustworthy than the statements of the Bible, but that these discoveries afford an independent source of information of real value.

In connection with our study of sidelights in general upon the Bible, it will be profitable to take

a bird's-eye glance over this wide field, in so far at least as it affords added light upon our understanding of the sacred Word and helps to confirm our confidence in it.

I.

First of all we turn our attention to EGYPT, whose vast storehouse of antiquities and whose innumerable hieroglyphic inscriptions are now yielding up their secrets. As a result, not only are new evidences of the greatness of the old civilizations of the Nile valley brought to light, but testimony is secured to the accuracy of Biblical references to the character of the ancient Egyptians. A new background has also been provided for such of the Old Testament scenes and narratives as pertain to Egypt — the stories of Abraham and Joseph, of the sojourn of the Israelites, of Moses and the exodus. There are confirmations too, of the Biblical record of Egyptian invasions of the Holy Land, of the relations which existed between Egypt and Palestine, even between Egypt and the empires far to the east. These hieroglyphic inscriptions long baffled the efforts of modern scholarship until, in a strange way, a key to their interpretation was discovered. This was through the finding of the Rosetta stone with its trilingual inscription.

The discovery of this stone and of the key which its inscriptions afforded, was on this wise. In the

year 1799, at the close of Napoleon's Egyptian campaign, and as one of its most useful results, a French explorer while making excavations near Rosetta at the mouth of the Nile, came upon a block of granite which, when removed from its bed, was found to be three feet nine inches in length, two feet four inches in width, eleven inches thick, and to contain inscriptions in three languages. The characters of the upper inscription of fourteen lines resembled those everywhere to be seen on the obelisks and ruined temples of the land. Below were thirty-two lines of another kind of script. At the bottom were fifty-four lines — of which twenty-eight were complete — in Greek uncial letters. The latter were read without difficulty, and told the story of the stone. The natural conjecture was that these three inscriptions were the same, as was afterward proved to be the case. The Rosetta stone is now in the British museum where it is open to the inspection of visitors. For a number of years the two upper inscriptions remained riddles, but at length, through painstaking comparisons with the Egyptian language, their meaning was determined, and a door opened to a knowledge of the ancient civilization of the region. Light has also been thrown upon the period of the Israelitish sojourn in Egypt, and subsequent Egyptian history in its relations to Palestine. "Thus when human learning stood dumb and wondering before Egyptian hieroglyphics, Provi-

dence came to the aid of scholars by revealing stories brought from their hiding places, and opened a way for reading the monuments.”

When Abraham went into Egypt, (Gen. xii:10 and ff.), the empire was already old. According to the records, its history began with Menes who united the independent states of the Nile valley into a single kingdom, and established his capital at Memphis. The first six dynasties represented what is called the Old Empire. During this period, art and culture reached a higher point than at any subsequent time in Egyptian history. An era of disaster and decline followed, but under the warrior princes of the 12th dynasty the empire revived and the capital was established at Thebes. This Middle Empire, as it is termed, did not last long. The country was overrun by Semitic invaders from Canaan and Arabia who established their seat at Zoan, and continued to rule the country for over five centuries. These foreigners are known in history as the Hyksos, or Shepherds. It must have been while these Hyksos kings were holding court at Zoan that Abraham entered the land, for here he found men of Semitic blood like himself, and speaking the same language. Already these foreign rulers were designated by the Egyptian title Pharaoh, and other Egyptian customs had been adopted by them. These facts add interest

to the story of Abraham in Egypt, and help to make it real. Its settings, in the light of the prevailing customs of the times as now known, are all natural.

The same is true of the story of Joseph, (Gen. chs. xxxvii-1). It is probable that the Hyksos were still supreme when he was carried into Egypt. Many things in the Biblical description of him, of his dress and work, are confirmed by the customs of the ancient Egyptians. Even the form and dress of the dreams referred to in the narrative, including Pharaoh's dream, are thoroughly Egyptian. Several references to widespread droughts growing out of the failure of the annual rise of the Nile, are found on the monuments. One famine of seven years' duration at about the time of Joseph is especially described. Storehouses of grain were provided by some of the rulers against just such emergencies. The name Goshen has not yet been discovered on any inscription, but it must have been in the neighborhood of Zoan. From the reference to the latter in Numbers xiii:22, it is inferred that Zoan and the Hebrews were brought into close relations. Each new discovery touching the period when Abraham and Joseph were in Egypt, increases the probability of a Hyksos domination of the country at that time.

At length a native Egyptian dynasty recovered the throne and the Hyksos usurpers were driven

from the country. But the expulsion of the latter meant oppression to the Israelites who had now for some years, or since the time of Joseph, been dwellers in the land of Goshen. Their numbers meanwhile had greatly increased.

The hatred of shepherds which the Egyptians felt, undoubtedly grew out of the fact that the usurping Hyksos kings were of shepherds' origin. This would sufficiently account for the fact that under the new régime the Israelitish shepherds were not regarded with favor. For the Egyptians themselves, a new era of conquest and of glory was inaugurated. The war against Asiatics, begun in Egypt against the Hyksos, was carried into Asia itself. Under Thothmes III and other noted monarchs of the 18th dynasty, the Egyptian armies traversed Syria and penetrated as far as the Euphrates. The records of this brilliant period are easily read. On the temple walls of Karnak at Thebes, Thothmes III gives a list of Canaanitish towns which submitted to him. Among these we recognize several familiar Biblical names, such as Zarthan, Beroth, Taanach, Shunem, Laish, Merom, Kishon, Sharon, Joppa, Beyrout, Accho, Heshon, Megiddo, Hamath, Damascus. The Cleopatra Needle on the Thames embankment at London is an obelisk recording the achievements of this monarch. It was reared at the time when Israel was sweating under the task-master in Egypt.

This period of Egyptian history has been wonderfully opened up by the Tel-el-Amarna tablets. To this place an early monarch removed his capital from Thebes, transferring to the palace library all the national archives. In 1877 a peasant who was seeking antiquities for purposes of sale found a number of tablets among the ruins of the place. Continued search led to the finding of over 300 of these tablets, entire or fragmentary. On them were writings in cuneiform characters. As such characters belonged only to the Euphrates valley, their existence in Egypt was a surprise. The mystery was cleared up when it was discovered that these tablets were letters or documents, written mostly in the Babylonish language, of the 15th century, B. C. They had been sent by rulers or officials of several Asiatic countries to the king of Egypt, and speak of political conditions, social relations and exchanges of gifts. Among these documents were communications from the governor of Jerusalem itself, in which were references to numerous places in Canaan. Out of 150 of these places referred to, no fewer than 100 can be identified. The existence of such documents, written probably a century before the exodus and the conquest, can hardly fail to strengthen our sense of the historical truth of the Biblical books which relate to this period.

The particular Pharaoh of the oppression, re-

ferred to in Exodus i:8 as the new king who arose over Egypt "who knew not Joseph," has long been supposed by scholars to have been Rameses II. He battled with the Hittites on the plains of Canaan, and established a line of Egyptian fortresses as far north as Damascus. The tablets which he engraved on the rocks at the mouth of Dog River in the vicinity of Beyrout, and which still remain, bear their testimony to his victorious campaigns. An interesting record has come down from the reign of this monarch, of a person, probably an official, who traveled through Palestine when it was nominally tributary to Egypt. This record shows what the country was like some time before its conquest by Joshua. Some well-known places are spoken of. Tyre, says this traveler, was built on an island. A ford of the Jordan at Bethshean is mentioned. Joppa at that time was surrounded by gardens of date palms.

This Pharaoh imposed upon the Israelites the task of building store cities, (Ex. i:11). Through excavations the site of the ancient city Pithom, one of these store-cities, has been discovered. Nearly the whole area of the city consisted of granaries. There were massive buildings with thick walls, whose only opening was at the top where the grain was poured in. Compartments were formed in the larger structures. The whole was made of brick work. Contrary to the Egyp-

tian customs of building, by which the slime from the Nile was used in brick-laying, the lower layers are laid in mortar. This fact is mentioned in Exodus, (i:14). These lower layers are made of brick in the making of which reed or straw was used. The bricks of the next layers above are made without reed or straw. The Egyptian name of the district in which Pithom was located exactly corresponds to the Succoth of the exodus, (xiii:20).

A discovery in Egypt in 1881 included mummies of some of the greatest of the Pharaohs, Rameses II among them. The face of the latter was of a highly intellectual type and indicated great firmness. He ruled for sixty-seven years and died at the age of ninety. This mummy is preserved in the Ghizeh museum.

The Pharaoh of the Exodus is believed to have been Meneptah II, a son of Rameses II. His reign was disturbed not only by the flight of the Israelites, but also by a great invasion of northern Egypt by the Libyans which was repulsed with difficulty. Other troublous events followed, all of which would help to explain how Canaan was left to itself about the time of Joshua's invasion. Accounts of the wars of Rameses II preceding Meneptah's reign, show that Canaan was not inhabited by Israelites at the time of his death, and statements in the book of Judges preclude the supposition that Palestine was an Egyptian province

in Joshua's time. The tribes of Canaan which had long been in subjection to Egypt had little or no union between themselves as Joshua found them, hence were unable to resist his advance. Egyptian chronology is as yet only fragmentary, but it has been thought probable that the exodus occurred about B. C. 1275, or a little later. The name of Israel is twice found on Egyptian monuments, one of them being of the time of Meneptah II. Portraits of some of the Canaanitish peoples show us the kind of soldiers who disputed with Joshua the occupancy of the promised land. These facts add vividness and a sense of reality to the story of the bondage of Israel in Egypt.

When David a few centuries later founded his empire, he had two powerful neighbors, Egypt and Assyria. Both of them were in a state of decline so that he was able to exercise a free hand in carrying on his conquests. Egypt was the first to recover her strength. In I Kings xiv:25, 26, (see also II Chron. xii), we find a reference to an invasion of Judah by Shishak, king of Egypt, "And it came to pass in the fifth year of King Rehoboam, that Shishak king of Egypt came up against Jerusalem." This is confirmed by inscriptions in stone in the Karnak Temple at Thebes, which give an account of the success of this monarch's military expeditions. Among his conquests the kingdom of Judah is especially mentioned. Among

the names of conquered cities we find Gaza, Taanach, Adullam, Shunem, Gibeon, and another name probably signifying Jerusalem. There are a number of sculptured representations of the campaign.

From such bits of information derived from the monuments of Egypt, much has been learned of the early history of that country, and of the manners and customs which prevailed in it. We see also how much confirmation there is, directly and indirectly, of those narratives in the Bible which relate to Egypt, what a background is afforded for them, and the sense of reality which is imparted to them.

II.

We turn next to the regions east of Palestine, the supposed cradle of the race — the VALLEY OF THE TIGRIS AND THE EUPHRATES. Here the results of investigation, of excavation, of the decipherment of inscriptions, have been even greater and more notable than those in Egypt.

We are not to forget that the Old Testament history is but fragmentary at best. It does not pretend to give a full and concise narration of events. Only such periods and such incidents of those periods as most clearly set forth the relations of God to His ancient people and of His providential guidance and discipline of them in the interests

of redemption, are dwelt upon. Often there are great gaps when we have no insight whatever into what has taken place. Long periods are sometimes passed over in silence. Not a few of these breaks in the Old Testament record have already been filled out from the inscriptions on the monuments of surrounding countries. Whole campaigns and long periods have been revealed in the light of recent discoveries. Indeed, a great empire, that of the Hittites, may be said to have been discovered in this way.

For centuries travelers had noticed many strange ruins, artificial mounds, remains of cities and towers — some very extensive — dry beds of ancient canals, in the valley of the Tigris and the Euphrates. Here and there bits of burnt brick and fragments of tablets, upon which were peculiar wedge-shaped characters, were found. No one could tell whether these characters represented a language or were merely ornamental. But many of these mounds have been opened during the past half century, and large quantities of these clay bricks and tablets, with their strange carvings, have been collected and are now in European and American museums. Some of them have, with great difficulty, been deciphered.

Ruins which were unearthed at Khorsabad have been proved to be the remains of a palace. Numerous large rooms were opened. Nearly all of them

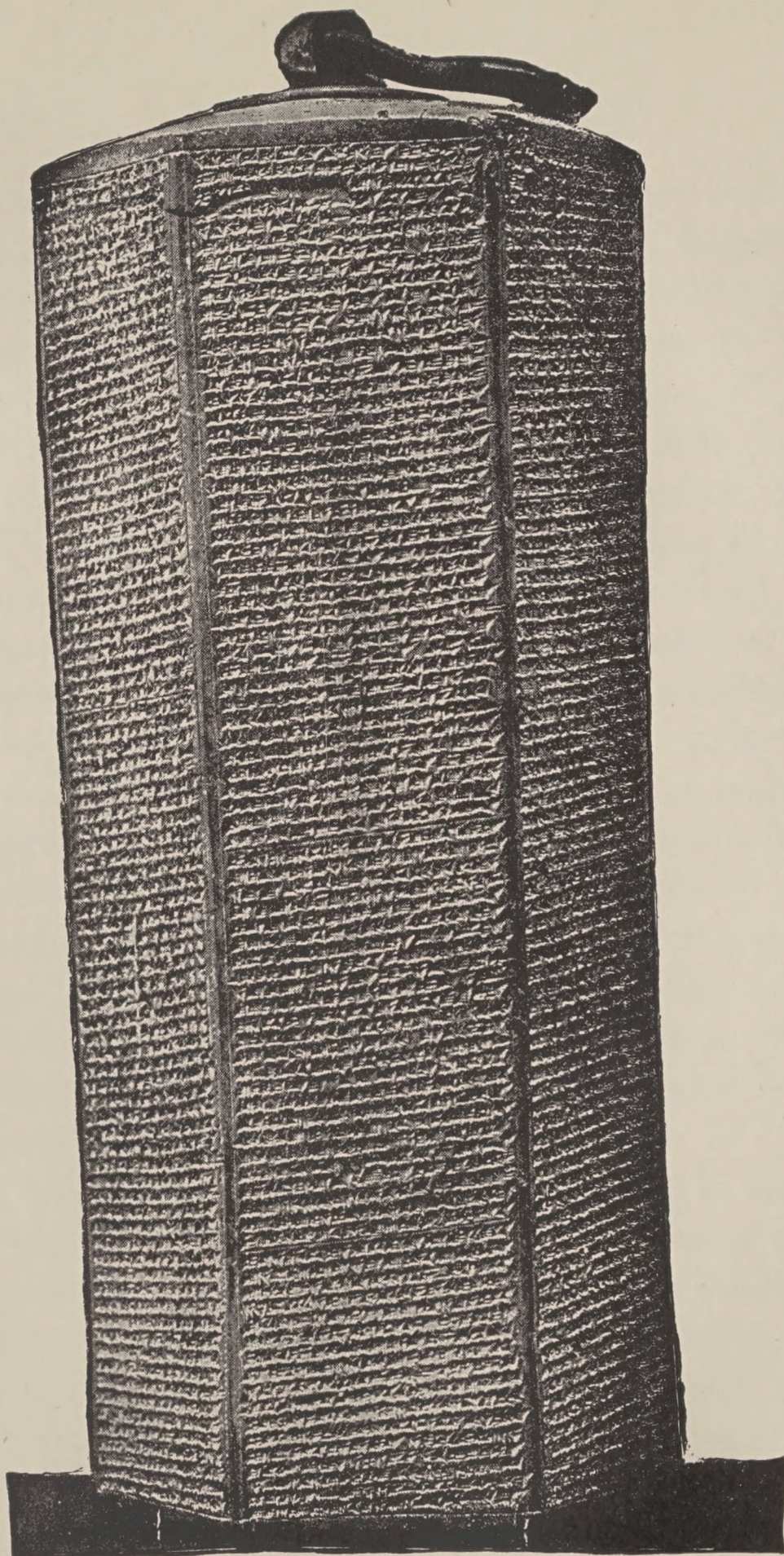
were wainscoted with sculptured alabaster slabs, upon which there were representations in relief of battles, sieges, triumphal processions, hunting scenes, etc. Across the face of these figures were characters similar to those on the burnt bricks scattered over the plain. These discoveries aroused tremendous interest. To what age did these ruins belong? Did those cuneiform characters represent a language? It finally became clear that these were the ruins of a palace of Sargon II of Assyria, no doubt one of the most magnificent palaces of the ancient world. It covered twenty-five acres in the north part of a section which was almost a mile square, and which was surrounded by a high wall with two gates on a side. A great quantity of these antiquities was sent to the Louvre Museum at Paris.

Next we read of the excavations of Layard, an Englishman, at Nimrud, a mound twenty miles east of Mosul. He too discovered a palace, which proved to be of the Assyrian king Assurnatsirpal who reigned B. C. 884-60, a contemporary of Omri, king of Israel. Here were many figures in relief and the same wedge-shaped characters as those found at Khorsabad. A large collection was taken to the British Museum in London. Layard's work was continued for several years, and other important ruins were unearthed.

Later the ruins of Nineveh were uncovered — ruins which had lain undisturbed for 2,500 years.

The site of the city referred to in the books of Jonah and Nahum had been lost and forgotten. Here the remains of a palace of magnificent proportions were found. It was shown to be the palace of Sennacherib, king of Assyria, (B. C. 705-681), whose campaign against Judah in B. C. 701 is stated, (II Kings xviii:13, xix:35 and ff.), to have terminated in the destruction of his army of 185,000 men. The palace covered an area of eight acres. As in the other instances referred to, the rooms were lined with inscriptions and records of events home and foreign. Further investigations disclosed in one of the mounds a library of 30,000 tablets, and cylinders which had belonged to Assurbanipal, (B. C. 668-626), the last king of Assyria, a contemporary of Manasseh and Josiah of Judah. These clay tablets, after having been impressed with the cuneiform characters, were baked hard to prevent them from crumbling.

Other archæological remains were found in lower Babylonia, revealing an ancient civilization of surprising extent. Many of these antiquities belonged to an age far anterior to the time of Abraham. Within a few years there have been marvelous discoveries by an American company at Nippur in that region. Thousands of tablets have been unearthed, and tons of antiquities have been deposited in the museums of this country and Europe. We



THE PRISM OF SENNACHERIB.

This record of Sennacherib's conquests is now in the British Museum. The face nearest the spectator gives the latter part of the account of Sennacherib's expedition against Hezekiah, which ends just before the division line about half-way down the column. Sennacherib does not mention Tirhakah as Hezekiah's ally, nor is there, in his account, any word of disaster.

now see that Abraham came to Canaan from a civilization which was surprisingly advanced. Ur, the city from which he came originally, was a center of empire 2,000 years before the patriarch lived. Haran, 600 miles from Ur, was an important frontier town in the northwest part of Mesopotamia, and on the highroad which led from Babylonia and Assyria to Palestine, commanding this road not only, but a ford also of the Euphrates. The cities of Ur and Haran were curiously related. Both were centers of a common worship. The journey of Abraham first from Ur to Haran with his father Terah, and later from Haran to Canaan, is therefore by no means an improbability. The monuments, indeed, render it exceedingly probable that the account of it in the eleventh and twelfth chapters of Genesis is correct.

The Nippur tablets from the reign of Darius II contain a number of Jewish names found in the genealogical lists of Ezra, Nehemiah, and Chronicles.

But while immense quantities of inscriptions and sculptures of the ages past have been and are accumulating, it has not been an easy matter to decipher and understand them. Yet as in Egypt, so here, a key was at length obtained with which to unlock their meaning. In 1835 an English officer in the Persian army, H. C. Rawlinson, made

a discovery in the Zagros mountains which ultimately led to a solution of the difficulty. It was the now famous Behistun rock within the ancient realm of the Persian monarch Darius. Upon the almost perpendicular side of a limestone mountain rising out of the plain to a height of 1,700 feet, he saw, about 350 feet above the base, a large space which had evidently been hewn off and polished, upon which there was a large bas-relief representing a king before whom stood a long line of captives bound with rope, neck to neck. Adjacent were several columns of cuneiform inscriptions in three different languages, which afterward proved to be Persian, Median and Babylonian. By climbing over slippery and dangerous places Rawlinson finally reached a narrow ledge of rock fourteen inches wide at the foot of the inscription. He resolved to copy it, and his efforts to do so continued, at intervals, over a period of four years, when the work was completed. To do this various schemes were devised. At one time he was suspended on a swing in front of the writings. Next he set to work to translate the inscriptions. By various processes, guesses, testings, comparisons with Sanscrit and other languages, he succeeded. Ten years after the discovery, he sent his translation of the Persian text of this Behistun inscription to Europe, and in 1847, text, translation, and a commentary upon it, were published. It was shown that these

inscriptions were cut here by order of Darius I, king of Persia, about 515 B. C. and formed a valuable historical record of the time. In due season, as a result of the efforts of scholars, the other two languages began to yield their secrets. It was found that all three inscriptions were the same, and that they were addressed by Darius to the three chief populations of the Persian empire. Thus a key to the reading of the cuneiform characters in which the East so abounds, was at last discovered, and in a way similar to that by which the hieroglyphics of Egypt came at last to be understood. This decipherment of these wedge-shaped characters has been one of the marvelous achievements of the century.

Some of these inscriptions relate to prehistoric times, as in the case of some of those in Egypt. Among them are stories as to the creation, the origin and early history of mankind, the temptation, the deluge, the confusion of tongues. These legends resemble the early chapters in Genesis, although the spirit of the two accounts differs essentially. The Scripture narratives are far superior in every way. The seventh day was observed as a day of rest by the ancient Babylonians as among the Jews. Many statements in the fourteenth chapter of Genesis, which have been pronounced absurd and impossible by certain critics, are corroborated. The records show that

in the days of Abraham the relations between the kings of Canaan and of Babylon were just what is there described. Such campaigns as that of Chedorlaomer and his allies were not unusual. Conquerors from Mesopotamia sometimes swept down upon the coast of the Mediterranean, and even the name of Chedorlaomer, together with the names of the other kings mentioned in Genesis xiv as having been associated with him, has been discovered.

Among the inscriptions which pertain to campaigns of eastern monarchs to the westward and which are of interest in so far as they related to Palestine and Syria and from being referred to in the Old Testament, are those especially of Shalmaneser II, Sargon II and Sennacherib of Assyria, and Nebuchadrezzar of Babylon.

The reign of Shalmaneser II extended from about B. C. 860 to B. C. 825. His father had made conquests to the Mediterranean, but Syria and Israel had been left intact. The son aimed to secure for Assyria the entire region west of the Euphrates. His own record bears testimony to the existence of Ahab, of Ben-hadad, and Hazael of Damascus, and of "Jehu, son of Omri." The first intimation of his approach to Syria and Israel is found in II Kings xvi. These two countries had been warring against each other, but now formed

an alliance in the presence of a common danger. Evidence of the truth of these statements is found in the inscriptions of this monarch, showing the attempt of these allied powers to withstand him. Nevertheless he reduced Damascus, Hauran, and all the territory to the Mediterranean. One of his inscriptions speaks of "10,000 men belonging to Ahab of Israel." The records of the several western campaigns of this Assyrian monarch help to complete the picture of the political situation in Syria and Palestine at that period as partially given in the Old Testament.

Tiglath-Pileser III has left important documents in which he mentions Azariah (Uzziah) and Ahaz of Judah, as well as Pekah and Hoshea of Israel, and Rezin of Damascus. He was prevented by difficulties near home from engaging extensively in western campaigns. This afforded both Israel and Judah opportunity to develop their resources. The acme, indeed, of both these countries, commercially and politically, was reached during this period. Jeroboam II conquered much territory to the north and south. The demoralizing effect of this prosperity upon the moral and religious condition of the people, is set forth in graphic terms by Amos and Hosea. When Assyria began to revive and to resume her western campaigns, great political and social distress re-

sulted to both Israel and Judah, (Hosea chs. iv-xiv). Here we have the beginning of the prophecies of Isaiah.

In B. C. 722, Sargon II of Assyria, after a three years' siege — which had been begun by Shalmaneser his predecessor, but who died before it was completed — captured the stronghold of Samaria, capital of Israel, and carried off 27,000 of the inhabitants. The possession of this fortress was of great consequence to Assyria, since the valley of Megiddo, in or near which it was located, was the great highway of caravans and armies, and the historic center of a populous and fertile country. Sargon's records describe this campaign, and correspond with that given in II Kings xviii:9-11. We read also, (Isaiah xx:1), that he besieged and captured Ashdod, one of the five great Philistine cities. For some time this Scripture reference was questioned, but among the ruins of Sargon's palace at Khorsabad, a description of this expedition to Ashdod has been found. It is attributed to the year B. C. 711. The death of the king, as recorded, occurred B. C. 705. Thus the discredited allusion of Isaiah is confirmed.

Sennacherib ascended the Assyrian throne upon the death of his father, Sargon II. Hezekiah was king of Judah at that time. Three years later Phœnicia and Judah revolted against the Assyrian

power, and this led Sennacherib to march against them. It was in connection with this campaign that his army was overtaken by a disaster, by which 185,000 men were smitten in one night, and the capture of Jerusalem averted. The Biblical account of this campaign and this disaster, which is quite full, is given in Isaiah xxxvi and xxxvii. In Sennacherib's inscriptions there is an account of this campaign, but without any reference to the disaster to his army. He mentions, however, the capture of forty-six of Hezekiah's strong cities. The two accounts supplement each other.

Assyria was destroyed six or seven years before B. C. 600, and now after 2,500 years of silence, we learn, by the testimony of the monuments, of her ancient vastness and power, as we also see how perfectly these records correspond with the character given her by the Bible writers. Such Biblical references are found in Isaiah v:25-29, in Nahum, in Zeph. ii:13-15, and elsewhere. As far as these descriptions go, they harmonize with the accounts given in the inscriptions which have come to light. A terrible picture of the final tragedy of Nineveh's fall is painted by the prophet Nahum.

Out of the ruins of the Assyrian empire, that of Babylonia arose. But at this time the power of Egypt was increasing, and Egyptian kings began again to dream of an Asiatic empire. This led to the eastern expedition of Necho, king of Egypt.

As he was passing through the coast lands of Palestine, Josiah, king of Judah, attempted to resist him. The result was Josiah's defeat and death, (II Kings xxiii:29).

The Egyptian and Babylonian armies met at Carchemish. Nebuchadrezzar, son of Nabopolassar, king of Babylon, and who soon after became king, was at the head of the Babylonian forces. The Egyptians were defeated and forced to retreat, (Jer. xlvi). This battle settled the question of the mastery of western Asia, and Judah and the countries adjoining came under the Babylonian yoke. Later Judah revolted, was overpowered by Nebuchadrezzar, Jerusalem was taken and plundered, and large booty carried to Babylon, together with 10,000 captives. As far as discovered, the inscriptions of Nebuchadrezzar give but meager accounts of his exploits, yet they are sufficient to indicate his administrative ability. In their references to his Egyptian campaigns, of which both Jeremiah and Ezekiel prophesied, the Babylonian army not only swept the whole of the northern portion of Egypt, but penetrated as far south as Assouan. His records are quite full, however, in regard to his building operations at Babylon, (Dan. iv:30). Many bricks from the ruins of Babylon bear the name of this monarch.

Although no cuneiform inscriptions have yet been discovered describing Nebuchadrezzar's cam-

paings against Judah and Phœnicia, a curious memorial of them was found some years ago on the north bank of Dog River a few miles north of Beirut. An ancient highroad from Damascus to the seacoast led along the gorge which this river has made. By the side of this old road where it winds around the promontory which forms the south bank of the river, foreign conquerors of Asia, whether Egyptian or Assyrian, have left carved monuments of themselves. Rameses II of Egypt, Sennacherib and Esar-Haddon of Assyria, have all recorded their names and deeds upon the face of the cliff. Near them the obliterated monuments of other, and perhaps older, kings may still be seen. But there was also an inscription by Nebuchadrezzar on a loftier cliff on the north bank of the river, long hidden from view by a mass of shrubs and ferns. The existence of this inscription has only recently become known. This inscription, though much injured by time and weather, is still partly decipherable, and gives a list of the wines of Lebanon, among which the wines of Helban near Damascus were most highly prized.

Not many years after this a new power arose in the east. This was the empire of Cyrus. He soon absorbed the Median kingdom, and finally Babylon fell under his sway. The annals of Nabonidus, the last Semitic king of Babylon, and

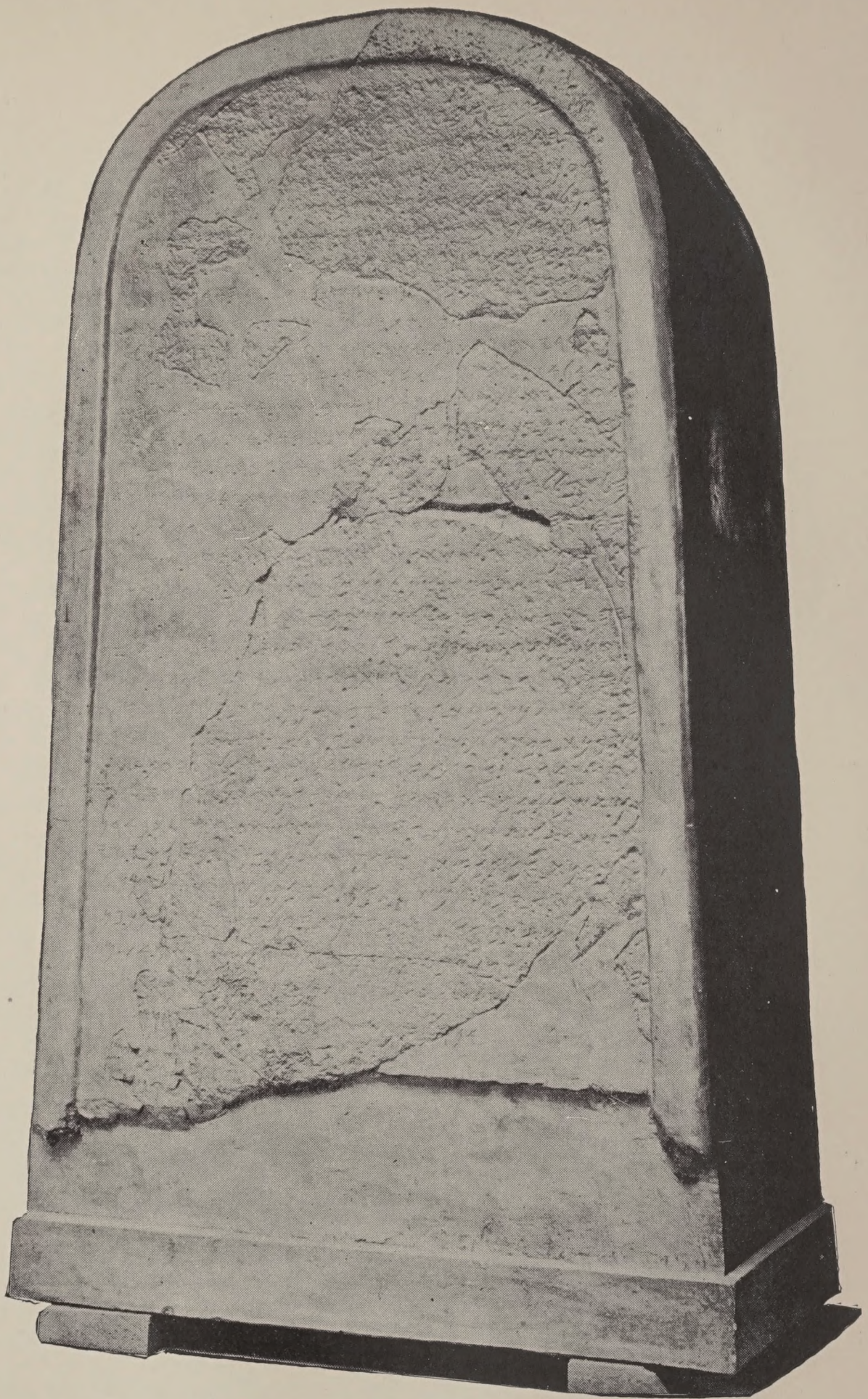
of Cyrus, picture the fall of this great city. Belshazzar is seen to be the son, co-regent, of Nabonidus. The inscriptions which relate to Cyrus confirm all that the Scriptures state of the relations between him and the Jewish people. They also make it necessary to revise some of the opinions which have been held concerning him and his religious views. Instead of being a Persian and a monotheist bent on destroying the idols of Babylon, as many have supposed, it appears that he was an Elamite and a polytheist. From motives of state policy he adopted the gods of conquered countries. One of the inscriptions discovered refers to the restoration of the Babylonian captives to their several homes. It was a conviction of Cyrus that the deportation of captive peoples was a mistake. It was through this conviction that God worked to bring about the fulfilment of his promises to the Jewish exiles. Those who chose to do so were allowed to return to Jerusalem. His proclamation to this effect is given in Ezra I. This was B. C. 538. Very likely it was from political considerations that he encouraged this return and the rebuilding of the strong fortress of Jerusalem. This would operate as a check against any advances of Egypt in that direction. The providential significance of the rise of Cyrus is vividly set forth in Isaiah xlv:1-5.

Susa or Shushan was the scene of interesting and fascinating incidents related in the Old Testament. Here Nehemiah was serving as cup-bearer to the Persian king, (Neh. i), when he felt called to the work of rebuilding the walls of the Holy City. It was here that the scene of the interesting narrative of the book of Esther was laid. Daniel refers to Susa in connection with one of his visions, (Dan. viii:2). From the results of excavations here, these Old Testament narratives can be accurately reconstructed. The construction of the palace is found to correspond in every important respect to the description given in the book of Esther. The city is shown to have been one of importance among the Elamites as early as B. C. 2280. Darius had his winter palace here. Many records of him have been found. To him we are indebted for the Behistun inscriptions which furnished the key to an understanding of all the cuneiform inscriptions of the East. Postal organizations on all the military routes of the empire, and which are referred to in Esther in connection with sending dispatches to all the provinces, were established in his time. His successor was Xerxes I, who has been identified with King Ahasuerus. The author of the book has given a true picture of the social and political conditions of the time. The manners and customs reflected in the narrative are shown to be distinctively Persian.

The Old Testament contains not a few references to the Hittites, although no direct records of them seem to have been preserved. For ages they were unknown, forgotten. But from sundry references to them in both Egyptian inscriptions and those of the far East, to say nothing of certain inscriptions and monuments of the Hittites themselves found here and there in Asia Minor, the existence of a great empire, together with its boundaries and the times when it flourished, have been virtually established. For nearly 1,000 years the Hittites formed a distinct nation. There are more than thirty references to them in the Tel-el-Amarna tablets. Their supremacy in Asia Minor and northern Syria was contemporary with the reign of Rameses II of Egypt. The Hittites of Palestine were probably no more than a small settlement of the great empire to the northward. Their origin is unknown. There is reason to believe that they were a people of considerable civilization. No clue to the Hittite language has yet been discovered.

III.

PALESTINE and vicinity have as yet furnished comparatively little monumental literature, although the larger part of this field has been covered by systematic and scientific research. Most of the inscriptions which have been found relate chiefly to linguistic questions. They would seem



THE MOABITE STONE.

The Moabite Stone, now in the Museum of the Louvre, Paris. It was found at Dibân, in the land of Moab, in 1868, and is dedicated to Chemosh (the principal god of the land) by Mesha, king of Moab, whose victory over the Israelites in the time of Ahab (about 875 B.C.) it records, together with the capture of Ateroth, Nebo, and Jahaz, and the restoration of several cities. The stone is inscribed with 34 lines of inscription in the Phœnician character, and measures 3 feet 10 inches high, 2 feet wide, and 14½ inches thick. The text has been completed from the paper "squeezes" taken before the original was broken, the restored places being the smoother portions of the surface.

to show that the Phœnician script was in use in Israel during the period of the kings, and that the language of the Hebrew Scriptures is very similar to that spoken in the times of David and Isaiah.

One of the most ancient styles of the Hebrew writing is found in the famous Moabite stone which was discovered east of the Jordan in 1868. It also supplements the Biblical record. The stone was set up by one of the Moabite kings named Mesha. He is referred to in II Kings iii:4. In the inscription on the stone, the Phœnician system of writing is employed, but the vocabulary and grammatical forms are closely analogous to the Hebrew. It was found at Dibon (referred to in Isa. xv:2) by a German missionary. The stone is of bluish black basalt, two feet wide, nearly four feet high, fourteen inches thick, and rounded at both top and bottom. The inscription contains thirty-four lines. Before possession of the stone was gained, however, and owing to jealousy and mistrust on the part of the Arabs, the latter built a fire under it, and when it was hot, poured water on it. This cracked it into fragments which they distributed among themselves, thinking them valuable as amulets and charms. Later, most of these pieces were recovered and the stone with its inscription was mostly restored. It is now in the Louvre at Paris. The inscription is a supplement to the records of the reigns of

Omri, Ahab, Jehoram and Jehoshaphat. The stone was set up B. C. 850 to commemorate Mesha's deliverance from the Israelites. The name of Jehovah to whom Israel is said to have erected altars, is mentioned in the inscription. It shows methods of warfare and marks of civilization similar to those of Israel. Further, it contains twenty-two Biblical proper names, thereby giving reality and vividness to numerous passages in Numbers, Joshua, Isaiah, and other books, and throwing light upon their interpretation.

But the real key to the Holy Land is to be found in the ruins and remains which have been and are likely to be uncovered at Jerusalem. Numerous results have already been realized here. Shafts have been sunk through the accumulated rubbish of ages. Old wall lines, mosaic chambers, aqueducts, pavements, and pottery of various periods, have been brought to light. One of the most important of these discoveries has been the inscription found in the tunnel of Siloam. There is no proof of its date, but the form of the letters seems to indicate that it cannot be much later than the age of the Moabite stone. The prevalent opinion of scholars is that the tunnel and inscription belong to the age of Hezekiah. (See II Kings xx:20.)

The pool of Siloam is fed by a conduit which, for a distance of 1,700 feet, is cut through the solid rock. It takes its start from the so-called

Virgin's Spring which rose outside of the eastern wall of the city on the sloping cliff which overlooks the valley of the Kidron. This is the only spring of fresh water in the immediate neighborhood, and in time of siege it was important not only that the enemy should be deprived of it but that its waters should be made available for use within the city. Accordingly a long passage or tunnel was excavated by means of which the overflow of the spring was brought into Jerusalem. The spring itself was covered with masonry so that it could be sealed up in case of war. That it actually was so sealed we know from a passage in II Chronicles, (ch. xxxii:3, 4).

About sixteen feet from the tunnel's mouth on the Siloam side, an inscription, discovered in 1880, was cut in the right-hand part of its rocky wall. The characters had become filled with deposits of lime from the fact of having been carved below the ordinary water-level in the subterranean passage. This rendered it difficult to distinguish them. This deposit, however, was removed by an acid, and the primitive tablet was revealed. It contained six lines, and was found to be a record in pure Biblical Hebrew of the construction of the conduit. The excavation was made by beginning work simultaneously at the two ends, and in spite of its windings the workmen almost succeeded in meeting in the middle. They approached so nearly, according

to the inscription, that the noise made by one party in hewing the rock was heard by the other. The portion of rock between was accordingly pierced. There are two *culs dé sac* in the center which represent the two extreme points reached by the two bands of excavators before they discovered that they were passing by each other. It is stated in the inscription that when the cut was completed, the waters flowed from the spring to the pool.

But this tunnel of Siloam is not the only one of the kind in the so-called hill of Ophel. Below this pool are traces of another into which the overflow of water from the one above was conducted through a second tunnel.

One of the chief results of the systematic and scientific research which has been carried forward for a number of years in Palestine, has been the identification of Scriptural sites. There are 622 names of places mentioned in the Bible which have been supposed to be located west of the Jordan. Of these, 360 could not be identified. But the great survey of western Palestine, began in 1872 and carried on for seven years, led to the discovery of 172 out of these 360 missing places.

TYRE and SIDON are prominent in the Old Testament. No other people than the Phœnicians exerted so potent an influence on Israel. From pre-historic times they were pioneers and leaders in the

maritime and land commerce of the world. Their products were largely cedar and stone. These they exchanged for cereals and other products of Israel. They were the chief artisans for the royal residences and for the Temple at Jerusalem. The book of I Kings, (v:17, 18), tells of hewed stones which were laid in the foundation of the Temple of Solomon with the coöperation of Hiram, king of Tyre. Eighty feet below the present surface of the earth at Jerusalem, masonry has been found whereon are marks which have been recognized as of Phœnician origin. In some parts of Phœnicia, walls of stone have been found which correspond to some of these massive walls in Jerusalem.

But the most fatal result of the close relations of Phœnicia and Palestine was the introduction into the latter of Baal worship with its horrible and debasing rites. It may be, very likely will be, that when the many accumulated inscriptions of Phœnicia are fully deciphered, light will be more fully thrown upon the nature of their religious worship and in confirmation of the representations of the Scriptures. The great numbers of images of Baal and Astarte which have been found in Cyprus, give evidence that their worship was connected with the most degrading rites. Indeed, wherever the Phœnicians went, they left the impress of their national characteristics and especially of their religion.

In this survey of a large and interesting field, we have attempted only to touch upon some of the more salient points in Old Testament history. We have seen what contributions have been made to our knowledge of history through the unearthing of long-buried and long-forgotten ruins, and through the deciphering of strange hieroglyphic and cuneiform inscriptions cut in clay or stone millenniums ago. Especially have we seen how, in incidental ways, many important Biblical statements have been confirmed, how obscure Scripture passages have been made clear, and how other passages still, giving but meager record of events, have been supplemented by these records cut in stone. Sometimes new difficulties have been created, but any apparent discrepancies in the two records, written and monumental, will doubtless continue to disappear as the inscriptions are more fully deciphered. There are few names of peoples now remaining in the Old Testament about which we have not received some new facts.

Great progress is also being made in verifying the historical validity of the writings of the New Testament, particularly the book of Acts, by inscriptions which have been found and deciphered in Asia Minor and elsewhere. The political condition and the names of the magistrates of those cities in Asia Minor, to which Luke refers in the narrative of the Acts, give evidence that he was per-

sonally familiar with the facts which he reports. Terms are employed and conditions are described which were true in his time but which were not true a few years before, and which ceased to be true a few years later.

It seems quite extraordinary, certainly a reason for thanksgiving on the part of the devout believer, that at this particular period when skeptical scholarship has sought so strongly to cast suspicion and doubt upon the reliability of the Scriptural records, there should come forth from these forgotten languages, from cuneiform and hieroglyphic inscriptions, from libraries of clay and stone, buried for thousands of years, these strange and minute confirmations of the Biblical story. The moral and spiritual teachings of the Word of God, of course, have always carried their own evidence, but it helps greatly to increase our confidence in them even, when we find so much light thrown upon its narrative portions from these records of the monuments. Some one has suggested that hereafter when one is inclined to deny the authenticity of the Scriptures upon any important point, he may well be led to pause before carrying out his purpose, by the thought that at almost any moment some stone in the desert may cry out, or some rocky tomb speak with unexpected voice, and put him to confusion.

CHAPTER VI

NEW TESTAMENT BACKGROUND

THE state of things, political and religious, which existed in Palestine and the Roman world at the time of Christ and the apostles, needs to be apprehended in order to a full and clear understanding of the New Testament itself. The facts pertaining to these conditions constitute the setting, or the background of the New Testament picture. From the nature of the case, a knowledge of them must throw much added light upon the significance of the picture itself. Without such knowledge, indeed, many things in the New Testament must remain vague, obscure, if not altogether meaningless.

The object of this chapter is to present, in comparatively brief compass, some of the most salient features of this background, an adequate understanding of which, ordinarily, can be gained only by extensive reading and study.

I. THE HISTORICAL SITUATION.

At the time of the introduction of Christianity, the Roman Empire had become so extended as to

embrace the entire civilized world as then known. Nation after nation had been brought under the Roman power, until its sway extended from the Atlantic on the west to the Euphrates on the east, and from the African desert on the south to the Danube River and to Scotland on the north. Its extent from east to west was 3,000 miles. It entirely surrounded the Mediterranean, which thus became a Roman sea. This fact also gave it a geographical unity. The population of the Empire at this time has been estimated at from eighty to one hundred and twenty millions.

The policy of the Roman government toward the subjugated provinces was liberal and sagacious. Although the great system of Roman jurisprudence, which was the principal legacy of Rome to subsequent ages, began to be introduced into them all, and justice was administered according to its provisions—a beneficent arrangement in itself—local laws and customs, as far as was practicable, were left undisturbed. The tendency of such a policy was toward a gradual unification and assimilation of the heterogeneous elements of which the Empire was composed. Furthermore, and as leading to the same result, a network of magnificently paved roads—remains of which, here and there, are still to be seen—was gradually covering the vast territory subject to Rome. A number of lines went out from Rome to the extremities of

the Empire, by means of which, and their various branches — which were connected with the routes of maritime travel — the most remote cities of the Empire were bound together and connected with the capital. By the same means, also, intercourse between the various peoples was rendered easy and safe. Business, pleasure, official duties, the movement of troops, led to constant use of these roads. Travel in all directions was stimulated. As a natural result, the ideas of the people were broadened and made more tolerant. Paul, in his missionary journeys, often traveled on these roads, as for example in Macedonia, when he moved southwestward from Philippi to Thessalonica and Berea (via Egnatia), and when, as a prisoner, he journeyed from Puteoli (via Appia) to Rome.

Another fact of interest to be noted in the general situation at this time, was the wide prevalence of the Greek language. The conquests of Alexander three centuries before had introduced it into the East, where — at least in Asia Minor and Egypt — it gained a permanent foothold, and it had also become more or less a common medium of communication at the West. Thus the many different languages and dialects of the provinces formed no insuperable barrier to those who would move among them. This is well illustrated in the case of the apostles who, with their knowledge of Greek, could preach almost anywhere.

The various religions of these different provinces were tolerated and treated with respect by the government. The number of these religions was productive of skepticism. Everywhere the more intelligent and thoughtful among the people had been influenced by Greek philosophy and were dissatisfied, and old beliefs were crumbling. The old paganism — except in country places — was practically dead. Furthermore, the morals of the people were at an extremely low ebb. According to Farrar, "The epoch which witnessed the early growth of Christianity was an epoch of which the horror and the degradation have rarely been equaled, and perhaps never exceeded, in the annals of mankind." * Religion and morality were divorced. The time was manifestly ripe for something better, if there was anything better, to supersede the effete religious systems which prevailed.

The Jewish nation was one of the nations under the dominion of Rome at this time. Unlike many of these nations, its people preserved their customs and their varied peculiarities. They were faithful to the religious teachings and moral standards of their fathers, and bore uncomplainingly the burdens of their worship. Wherever Jews were found, this loyalty to their faith was manifested. Attached more or less closely to the Jewish con-

* "The early days of Christianity." Ch. 1., P. 1.

gregations, which existed in every considerable city of the Empire, were usually a number of Gentiles, or heathen, who, dissatisfied with their own religion, had become interested in that of the Jews. Many of these Jews of the Dispersion — for so they were termed — made a practice of journeying to Jerusalem from time to time, to attend upon the great annual religious festivals which were held there. In this way thousands came together from all directions, as at Pentecost, traveling long distances often, and this contributed much toward maintaining a vital interest in their religion, and also toward keeping up their Jewish exclusiveness. A Greek version of the Old Testament, prepared for the use of these scattered Jews, had been in circulation for many years. This translation, made during the third century before Christ at Alexandria, is commonly called the Septuagint.

These facts, which describe the historical situation at this time — both in the external conditions which prevailed in the Roman Empire, and in the widespread dissatisfaction of the people with prevailing religions and philosophies — rendered it a peculiarly favorable time for the introduction and dissemination of Christianity, a religion fitted and designed to be universal. Many hungered for something more vital, more satisfactory, than was to be found in any of the decaying religions of

the time, even in the Jewish religion itself as then interpreted and illustrated. There was need of just such a religion as Christianity, and the conditions for its spread from Palestine, where it originated, were wholly favorable. The world was at peace, was under one government and one system of laws. The introduction of Christianity could hardly have been at a more opportune time or under more favorable conditions. To attribute this to mere chance is by no means an adequate explanation. It would seem as if Providence had prepared the way for it. This indeed has been the conviction of most Christian scholars.

Even more notable, perhaps, than the world's preparation for the advent of Christ and the dissemination of Christianity, was the preparation for it in the Holy Land and among the Jewish people. The Mosaic ritual had served its purpose. It had impressed upon the people certain fundamental and necessary truths in regard to God and the moral law, and developed in them a sense of sin and guilt. But it was unable to provide the salvation from sin which the more spiritually-minded among them craved. The expectation, also, of a Coming One, long foreshadowed by the Jewish prophets, was widely prevalent.

II. POLITICAL CONDITIONS IN PALESTINE.

At the time of Christ's advent, the Jewish nation was a dependency of Rome. For centuries its history had been a checkered one. For a considerable period it was entirely independent. Then Assyrian and Babylonian influences dominated it more or less. Egyptian influences were also brought to bear upon it. At the close of the Old Testament period, it was a province of Persia. In the year B. C. 333, it succumbed to Alexander the Great. From this time until B. C. 167, it was ruled alternately by his successors in Syria and Egypt. Then, under the Maccabees, it gained its independence, maintaining it under different dynasties and with varying success until B. C. 63, when it became a Roman province.

And yet, Palestine was only indirectly under Roman rule. The policy of leaving the administration of local affairs largely to its subjugated people, prevailed. In B. C. 37, Herod I, sometimes called Herod the Great — an Idumæan by birth — became king, his reign continuing 33 years, or until B. C. 4. He was a man of ability and a great builder. Among other things, he rebuilt and decorated the Temple in order to conciliate the people, to whom his cruel disposition, his tyranny, and the acts of bloodshed for which he was responsible, had rendered him odious. It was he

who, when Christ was born at Bethlehem and was spoken of by the Magians from the East as the "new-born King of the Jews," issued an edict for the destruction of all the male children of the place of two years of age and under, hoping in this way to include him among them, (Matt. ii:1, 16). Herod's death occurred not long after.

By his will, which was practically though not entirely confirmed at Rome, Herod's kingdom was divided among his three sons. The *first* of the three parts into which it was divided, was called the province of Judea, which included also Samaria on the north, and Idumæa on the south. This district was assigned to Archelaus, who had many of the qualities of his father, and who, after a few years, was deposed for his barbarity and cruelty. His territory was then made an imperial province, and was ruled by a Roman procurator or governor. Very little is known of these procurators until Pontius Pilate was appointed to that office by the Emperor Tiberias. He held the position at the time of Christ's public ministry, and — fearful of increasing his unpopularity if he did not do so — yielded to the insistent clamor of the Jews for his crucifixion, after he had been sentenced to death by the Jewish High Council, (Luke iii:1, xxiii:1-25; Matt. xxvii:11-26; Mark xv:1-15, 43, 44; John xviii:29-40, xix:1-22, 31 38; Acts iv:27). Pilate's character is well illustrated

in this and various other recorded incidents of his official career. He was a worldling who was willing to act justly if this could be done consistently with his own selfish interests. He would gladly have released Jesus, whom he believed to be an innocent victim of Jewish malice, but to do so might have cost him his position, and he would run no risk.

The *second* of the three parts of Herod's kingdom, comprising Galilee and Perea — the latter to the southeast of the Sea of Galilee and east of the Jordan — was given to Antipas, another son. He is referred to in the New Testament as Herod Antipas, or Herod the Tetrarch. His capital was Tiberias, which he himself built. He was the Herod under whose sway Jesus lived while in Galilee, and who executed John the Baptist, (Luke iii: 1; Matt. xiv:1-10; Mark vi;14-28; Luke iii:19, 20, ix:7-9). His unscrupulous character appears in his relations with Herodias, a brother's wife, from whom she obtained a divorce, and for whom Antipas divorced his own wife. She was the prime mover in the murder of John the Baptist, and he was weak enough to consent to it. Because of his cunning, he was described by our Lord as "that fox," (Luke xiii:32). He was finally deposed and banished.

Galilee was an exceedingly prosperous region, full of vineyards and gardens, villages and cities.

Its dense population was made up of both Gentiles and Jews, the latter no doubt predominating. Their life was freer and broader than that of their brethren in Judea. It was here that Christ's childhood and youth were spent, and this was the scene of a greater part of His public ministry. Perea, in which He spent the last months of this ministry, was somewhat larger than Galilee, but was of little importance politically.

The *third* portion into which the kingdom of Herod the Great was divided, comprised Iturea and Trachonitis, the district, speaking generally, to the north and east of the Sea of Galilee. It was assigned to Philip, who is referred to in Luke iii: 1 as "Philip the Tetrarch." He reigned 37 years — from B. C. 4 to A. D. 33. His character was excellent, and his rule, according to Josephus, mild and just. Among other things, he enlarged the town of Paneas, at one of the sources of the Jordan, and named it Cæsarea. It was afterwards known as Cæsarea Philippi (Matt. xvi:13, Mark viii:27), to distinguish it from Cæsarea on the Mediterranean. Upon his death, his dominions were annexed to the province of Syria, but in A. D. 37, were assigned to Herod Agrippa I. In A. D. 39, the Emperor banished Herod the Tetrarch of Galilee, and added his tetrarchy to the kingdom of Agrippa. Later, Judea and Samaria were added to his dominions as a reward for service rendered

to the Emperor Claudius, who was chosen after Caligula was assassinated. It was this Herod who slew James, the brother of John, with the sword, (Acts xii:1, 2), imprisoned Peter (verses 3-19), and at Cæsarea, immediately after he had accepted divine honor, was miserably "eaten of worms" (verses 20-23). He died in A. D. 44, in the 54th year of his age, leaving four children, of whom three — Agrippa, Bernice, and Drusilla — are mentioned in Scripture, (Acts xxiv:24, xxv:13, xxvi:30). It was his son Agrippa — Herod Agrippa II — who went to Cæsarea to salute Festus, the successor of Felix, as procurator of Judea, and it was before him, Festus, and Bernice — the latter a sister of Agrippa — that Paul, then a prisoner in Cæsarea, was permitted to plead his cause, (Acts xxv:13-xxvi:32).

A word should be said about the "region of Decapolis" which is occasionally referred to in the New Testament. It was a section of country beginning where the plain of Esdraelon opens into the Jordan valley and expands eastward beyond the river into Bashan. It bordered on the Sea of Galilee. It was dominated by ten confederated Greek cities. Such leagues existed in other parts of the Roman Empire for purposes of trade and of defense. The region had a Greek speaking population, mingled with natives, as early as the time of Herod the Great. Three roads connected the Es-

draelon plain with the commercial highway which runs between Damascus and Arabia along the edge of the desert. The ten towns stood on these three roads and on the highway. Multitudes from Decapolis, we read, followed Jesus at an early period of His ministry, (Matt. iv:25). The Gadarene demoniac, after the evil spirit had been exorcised, published his deliverance in Decapolis, (Mark v:20). Jesus traveled through it on His way from Tyre and Sidon to the Sea of Galilee, approaching the lake from the eastern side, (Mark vii:31).

The most important of these three separate administrative districts into which Herod I's dominion had been divided, was the one first mentioned, the *Province of Judea*. It was composed of three parts, each historically distinct from the others. Judea proper had long been the seat of theocratic authority. In Jerusalem was the Temple, to which all pious Jews, from Rome to Babylon, sent up their gifts, and whither they streamed from all quarters to attend upon the great annual festivals. Idumea, originally Edom, at the south of Judea, was another of these districts. It lay along the route pursued by the Israelites from the peninsula of Sinai to Kadesh-Barnea, and thence back again to Elath at the head of the Gulf of Akabah, or the eastern arm of the Red Sea. The third district was Samaria, north of Judea, between whose inhabit-

ants and those of Judea, a long-time feud existed, and which still continued in the time of Christ, (John iv:9). The Samaritans were a mongrel people made up of Jewish and Gentile elements, especially the decendants of the heathen colonists who were introduced by the Assyrians after the fall of the northern kingdom and the deportation of its leading inhabitants. Their religion was essentially the same as that of Israel in its earlier development. They accepted the Pentateuch, practiced the rite of circumcision, and had built a temple of their own on Mount Gerizim, (John iv:20).

At the time of Christ's ministry, the head of the Judean province — made up of these three districts — was the Roman procurator, Pontius Pilate. His official residence was Cæsarea, the Roman capital of the province, which was located on the Mediterranean some forty-five miles northwest of Jerusalem, although he spent considerable time in the latter city. The procurator, as agent of the Roman Emperor, was primarily a fiscal agent, looking after the collection of the Roman taxes. The direct taxes were collected by salaried officials. The customs, or indirect taxes, made up of various duties on exports and imports, were "farmed out" to speculators who had bought the right to collect them. They were gathered by the representatives of these speculators, who were called "publicans." These publicans practiced all manner of extortions

upon the people, and were cordially hated in consequence. They were commonly drawn from the more unscrupulous elements among the population. They were regarded by the Jews as traitors and apostates, the willing tools of their oppressors. Perhaps the frequent coupling of the terms "publicans" and "sinners" in the Gospels, rested on this fact, (Luke iii:12, v:29, xviii:10, xix:2, Matt. v:46, ix:10, xxi:31, 32, etc.). Matthew and Zaccheus were originally publicans, (Matt. x:3, Luke xix:5, 8). Christ was scornfully spoken of as a "friend of publicans and sinners," (Matt. ix:11).

But in addition to his fiscal duties, the procurator had military and judicial functions as well. The garrison at Jerusalem consisted usually of a single Roman cohort, or of 500 or 600 men, who stood at his command. At the time of the principal feasts, the number was doubled. The other forces at the disposal of the procurator were probably recruited from the country itself—largely from among the Samaritans, which would not of course tend to the promotion of good-feeling among the Jews. The centurion of Capernaum, (Matt. viii:5), was an officer of the army of Herod Antipas. As a judge, the procurator had the power of life and death, appeal to the Emperor being granted only in the case of Roman citizens, as of Paul at Cæsarea, (Acts xxv:11, 12), and then only after formal protest had been made. The Jews were not

allowed to sentence any one to death without the approval of the Roman official at the head of the province, as when the Jews sought Pilate's approval to their sentence of the death-penalty upon Christ, (John xviii:29-31). Religious liberty, however, was granted to the Jews, and the sanctity of the Temple was guaranteed.

An important feature of the political conditions in Palestine at the time of Christ, pertained to the High Council of the Jews, or the Sanhedrin, and the parties composing it. It may be said to have been essentially the original town council, with changed powers and character. In addition to various administrative functions, it had come to be the supreme court for the trial of all cases of importance — civil, criminal, and religious — under the Mosaic law. This body, through the two political parties which composed it, the Pharisees and Sadducees, exerted an important political as well as religious influence. It was composed of 71 members, who were men of pure Hebrew descent. They were not all of equal rank, members of the high priestly families being naturally more influential than the others. Other members were called scribes, or simply elders. The judgment of the Sanhedrin was final except in capital cases.

At the head of the Jewish commonwealth, under the Romans, was the hereditary High Priest. He

was the political head of the nation as well as the presiding officer of the Sanhedrin. Men who had held the office continued to occupy an important and influential position even after they retired from it. At the time of Christ's trial we see what an influence the elder Annas exerted, even as a retired high priest. The majority of these priests were men of Sadducaic tendencies.

There are various references in the New Testament to this High Council or Sanhedrin. Jesus was tried before it, (Matt. xxvi:59, Mark xiv:55, xv:1, Luke xxii:66, John xi:47). It was before this council that Peter, John, and the other apostles were brought, (Acts iv:5, 6, 15; v:21, 27, 34, 41). Stephen was taken before it, (Acts vi:12), so also was Paul, (Acts xxii:30; xxiii:15; xxiv:20). The Sanhedrin was swept away at the destruction of Jerusalem.

III. THE MOSAIC LAW AND ITS INSTITUTIONS.

1. *The Law.*

The Mosaic Law, as included comprehensively in the Pentateuch, with its moral requirements, varied rites, its elaborate ceremonials, its multiplied and minute details, was fundamental in Jewish thought and life. Not only did it regulate the religious life and relations of the people, but civil affairs as well. Strict and literal obedience to it

constituted the core of religion. Everything centered in it, all the hopes of Israel gathered about it. God had given it to the descendants of Abraham at the hands of Moses, and had covenanted to bless them as a nation and as individuals on condition of loyal obedience to it. For centuries it was the molding influence of Jewish life.

In the course of time a body of men arose whose business it was to copy and study the law, who also instructed the people in its requirements. These were the scribes, called sometimes in the New Testament, "teachers of the law," or "lawyers," (Matt. xxii:35; Luke x:25, xi:45, 46; I Tim. i:7). The opinions or interpretations of the law by leading scribes were preserved, at length, along with the law itself, and finally came to be regarded as of corresponding authority. These decisions or opinions constituted the "traditions," or "tradition of the elders," (Matt. xv:2, 2, Mark vii:5, 13, Col. ii:8). Then parties sprung up of those who were mainly divided over questions growing out of the law, of which the principal were the Pharisees and Sadducees, who have already been referred to. The former were zealously devoted to the law of Moses and to the traditions of the elders. The latter accepted the law of Moses, interpreting it literally, and rejecting all the "traditions." The Sadducees were generally educated, mostly wealthy

and aristocratic, though comparatively few in number.

In Christ's time the earnest spirit of earlier periods had died out, and a zealous formalism or externalism prevailed. The letter of the law was worshiped — its spirit had been lost, (Matt. xxiii: 23-25, II Cor. iii:6). Yet the law had its mission in gradually preparing the minds of the people for a final and more spiritual and permanent religion, whose germ it contained, of which its varied rites were typical, to which they looked forward, and which was to be revealed in the fullness of time. The law was called by Paul a "schoolmaster" or "tutor" to lead men to Christ, (Gal. iii: 25).

We may notice more in detail some of the institutions, orders of men, sacrifices, and various practices of the Mosaic system as they prevailed in Christ's time, and which are more or less prominently referred to in the New Testament. Herein is to be found a large element of the New Testament background, which it is essential to understand in order to have a clear grasp of the New Testament itself and its teachings.

2. *The Temple and its Courts.*

A large part of the law was made up of directions as to the rites and ceremonies which were to be ob-

served, and sacrifices to be offered. A place for the performance of these rites was, according to the Jewish traditions, provided at first in the Tabernacle, which was fashioned after a pattern shown to Moses in the mount, (Heb. viii:5). After the conquest, the tabernacle was for a long time set up at Shiloh. Later, in the time of Solomon, it gave place to a permanent structure — the Temple at Jerusalem. This Temple, destroyed at the time of the fall of Jerusalem and the exile of its leading inhabitants, was replaced after the Return by one which was larger, but less gorgeous. Just before the time of Christ, Herod the Great rebuilt and repaired it in order to please the Jews.

The Temple of Herod was much the same in form as the Tabernacle, but was of larger dimensions. It faced the east. It was surrounded by chambers and other apartments, which were more extensive than the Temple itself. Outside the Temple proper and its various apartments were spacious courts of different names. The outermost court was called the *Court of the Gentiles*. It was an open court — said by some to have covered 14 acres or more — was surrounded by a high wall, and entered by six gates. It completely surrounded the Temple and all the other courts. It might be entered by persons of all nations, but it was death to any one not a Jew to advance beyond this court, and notices to this effect written in Latin, Greek, and Hebrew,

were made conspicuous. One of these inscriptions was discovered and published in 1871. Guards or keepers were stationed at the entrance of this next court within, to see that this regulation was strictly complied with. It was from this outer court that Jews drove the persons who had established a cattle market in it for the purpose of supplying those with sacrifices who came from a distance, (John ii:14, 15). This court was surrounded by a "Porch" or covered walks. The one on the east or front side was called "Solomon's Porch," (John x:23, Acts iii:11). In going up to the Temple from the east or outer gate, it was necessary to cross this and all the other courts.

The next court west was the *Court of the Women*, so-called because Jewish women, as well as Jewish men, could enter it. It was also called the Treasury, (Mark xii:41). The gate leading into this court was the "Beautiful Gate of the Temple" mentioned in Acts iii:2, 10. It was in this court that Jesus delivered His striking discourse to the Jews as found in John viii:1-20. Here the Pharisee and the publican of the parable were supposed to have come up to pray, (Luke xviii:10-13), and hither the lame man followed Peter and John after he was healed, (Acts iii:8). It was in the same court that the Jews laid hold of Paul, supposing him to have violated the law by taking a Gentile into it, (Acts xxi:26-29).

The *Court of Israel* was directly west of the Court of the Women. The ascent to this court — which was higher than that of the women because the rock on which the Temple stood rises in height as one advances westward — was by a flight of 15 steps. Only the men of Israel were allowed in this court. Here they stood in solemn and reverent silence while their sacrifices were burning in the inner court, and while the services of the sanctuary were being performed, (Luke i:8-11, 21, 22).

The *Court of the Priests* came next, and was raised somewhat above that of Israel. Within this court stood the brazen altar on which sacrifices were consumed. This court was accessible to other Israelites than the priests only for certain special purposes connected with their sacrifices.

From the Court of the Priests the ascent to the Temple was by a flight of 12 steps, which led into the sacred *Vestibule*, or *Porch*, which extended across the front of the structure. Then, within the *Temple* proper, which was by no means a large structure — only 90 x 60 feet — were the Holy and Most Holy Places, which were separated by an impervious veil, (Luke xxiii:45.) The *Holy Place* or sanctuary was 30 x 60 feet, and 45 feet high. Here were the golden altar of incense, a table for the shew-bread, and a golden candlestick. The *Most Holy Place*, or Holy of Holies, was a square room, 30 x 30 feet, into which the High

Priest alone entered, and he only once a year, on the Great Day of Atonement. In the Most Holy Place of Solomon's Temple, the sacred ark was placed.

Connected with the Temple, in Roman times, at the northwest corner of the Temple Area, was the strong castle called the *Tower of Antonia*, with its various courts and fortifications. A Roman garrison was stationed here. Its presence was especially important during the Jewish festivals, to prevent any excesses on the part of the populace. Paul, when rescued from the infuriated mob which had dragged him out of the Temple, was carried into this castle, and on the way thither was allowed to address the people from the stairs, (Acts xxi:30 and ff). The castle was finally demolished by order of Titus A. D. 70.

3. *The Priesthood, Sacrifices, Feasts, etc.*

The Priesthood. The daily worship of the Temple was conducted by the priesthood, a body of men specially set apart for that purpose. Each of its 24 divisions officiated a week at a time, thus two weeks during the year. Zacharias, father of John the Baptist, belonged to the eighth course, called the course of Abijah, (Luke i:5). The levites were a subordinate class of officials, really assistants to the priests, who performed various minor duties, including the care of the Temple, and slaying and preparing the sacrifices. But only the

priests were permitted to minister at the altar and within the sanctuary. The distinction between priests and levites is to be found in the fact that while the latter were made up in general of members of the tribe of Levi, the former were confined to a particular family of the tribe, that of Aaron. The High Priest was at the head of all religious affairs. He alone had the privilege of entering the Most Holy Place, and that only once a year, on the Great Day of Atonement. The priesthood of Christ is the substance and truth of which that of the Jews was but a shadow and figure. He as the everlasting priest, officiates in the heavens, (Heb. vii, ix:11-26).

Sacrifices. A sacrifice was an offering made to God on His altar by the hand of a lawful minister. It was properly the offering of a life, in this respect differing from an oblation, which was simply the offering of a gift. The offering of sacrifices was a custom which came down from the earliest time. The Mosaic law simply gave direction with reference to a practice which was already in existence. In the Temple, sacrifices were offered in behalf of the people by officiating priests. Their main work was that of sacrifice and its attendant services. There were two classes of sacrifices, public and private. The former were offered in the name of the people, and were purchased with a portion of the people's own gifts. The latter were those in which

private individuals only were concerned. Private offerings of various kinds constituted the bulk of the sacrifices. A fire was kept continually burning on the altar, night and day. The one place appointed in the law for the offering of sacrifices by the Jews, was around the one altar of the only true God in the Temple.

The Hebrews had three kinds of sacrifices: 1. The Burnt offering, in which the whole victim was consumed. It signified, on the part of the offerer, first an acknowledgment of his guilt in general, and second the entireness of his devotion of himself and his substance to God. On the part of the victim, it signified complete expiation. 2. The Sin offering — of which the trespass offering may be regarded as a variety — was expressive of reconciliation or atonement. It differed from the burnt offering in that it always had respect to particular offenses against the law, either moral or ceremonial, committed in ignorance, at least not in a presumptive spirit. 3. The Peace offering was offered in fulfilment of vows, to return thanks to God for benefits received (thank offering), or to satisfy private devotion (free will offering). It was offered whenever one chose, the only requirement being that the victim be without blemish. It signified reconcilment with God, and communion with Him and His people. The perpetual sacrifice of the Temple was a daily offering of two lambs on the al-

tar of burnt offering, one in the morning, the other in the evening.

Such were the sacrifices of the Hebrews. Though established by divine appointment, they were altogether incapable, in themselves, of purifying the soul or atoning for sin. They represented grace and purity, but did not communicate them. They were at best but typical, and foreshadowings of the true sacrifice, the Lamb of God, which would really take away the sins of the world. Accordingly, when Christ came and made an offering of Himself once for all, all other sacrifices were set aside, abolished, as no longer needed. For all who would believe in Him, this one great sacrifice superseded all others, (Heb. ix:9-15; x:1; I Cor. v:7; Heb. x:3, 8-10; Eph. v:2; Heb. ix:11-26).

Feasts. The three great feasts of the year with the Jews were: 1. The Feast of the Passover, commemorating the exodus from Egypt, and celebrated by eating a slain lamb with unleavened bread. It continued seven days, (Ex. xii; Mark xiv:12, 14; I Cor. v:7, etc.). The Savior partook of the Passover feast with His disciples on the evening preceding the crucifixion. At the close of it, the Lord's Supper was instituted, to commemorate the sufferings and death of Christ in behalf of men, and for their deliverance from sin — henceforth to supersede the Passover feast, (Matt. xxvi:17; Mark xiv:12; Luke xxii:7). The deliverance which the

Passover commemorated, was a type of the great salvation or deliverance from sin achieved for men by Christ through His sacrifice. 2. The Feast of Pentecost marked the completion of the corn harvest, and according to the later Jews, commemorated the giving of the law. It was celebrated by first fruits laid on the altar. It was at the time of this feast that the Spirit was poured out upon the disciples, (Acts ii:1-4) as predicted by Joel, (ch. ii:28 and ff); and as more specifically announced by Christ, (John xiv:16, 26, also xv:26). 3. The Feast of Tabernacles commemorated the life in the wilderness. It was also the harvest home at the close of the year, and was an expression of thanksgiving for harvest, the people living in booths meanwhile. It continued an entire week. The sacrifices at this feast were far more numerous than at any other. There were various other and lesser festivals or days of rest and worship among the Jews to perpetuate the memory of important events in Jewish history, but these three were the great feasts of the year. The Jews were wont to welcome guests with a feast, and to dismiss them in the same way. The returning prodigal in the parable was thus welcomed, (Luke xv:23). Many joyful events were observed with feasts, as for example in John ii:1-10.

Fasts. Fast days, also, were observed from time to time. Fasting had been practiced in all ages

and nations, in time of sorrow and affliction, although no example of fasting is mentioned among the Jews before the time of Moses. After that it was quite common among them, the people in this way humbling themselves before God, confessing their sins, and deprecating His displeasure. Especially were extended fasts appointed in times of public calamity. The Day of Atonement was the only fast day prescribed by the law. So far as we know, our Lord did not initiate any particular fast. On one occasion He intimated that the disciples would fast after His death, (Luke v:34, 35). He recognized the custom, and the apostles practiced it as occasion seemed to require, (Matt. vi:16-18; Acts xiii:3; I Cor. vii:5, etc.).

Clean and Unclean. One feature of the Mosaic law upon which great stress was laid by the scribes, was with reference to ceremonial defilement. It was contracted in various ways, voluntary and involuntary. In some cases it resulted from eating certain foods, in others by contact with men. Prohibition of certain kinds of food, for instance, based on Deut. xiv:3-20, was scrupulously enforced. The scribes prided themselves upon its strict observance. In ordinary cases, such defilement was removed on the evening of the same day by bathing. In other cases, a week, or even 40 or 50 days, with some sacrificial offerings, were required. The regulations on this general subject of ceremonial clean-

ness and uncleanness were carried to most absurd extremes.

The Sabbath. Before the resurrection of Jesus, it was observed on the seventh day of the week. After that, "the Lord's day"—our Sunday—was held in the same honor by Christians, and the observance of the seventh day was gradually discontinued by them, (Acts xx:7, I. Cor. xvi:2, Col. ii:10, 17, Rev. i:10).

IV. RELIGIOUS LIFE AND HOPES.

The religious life and hopes of the Jewish people at the time of Christ gathered about the Mosaic Law in its broadest sense, including the "traditions of the elders." The law regulated the entire life of the people, moral, social, religious. Its scrupulous observance was the supreme duty of every loyal Israelite. The decisions, or precedents, or "traditions" of the scribes, pertained to every imaginable phase of daily life. They were elaborated to an extent hardly to be conceived by us, and were frequently of a most fanciful character. To carry them out was next to impossible, while to the conscientious, the sense of obligation to do so constituted an unbearable burden.

The religious life of the people had become largely externalized. Religion had been made to consist primarily in a strict and literal observance to the manifold requirements of the Law, with its

additions. Formal accuracy in fulfilling the letter of these requirements was sufficient. There was little concern, as a rule, about the spirit of them. So the religious life became, for the most part, superficial, concerned chiefly with the Sabbath, with the various ablutions which were regarded as needful for the maintenance of ceremonial purity, with the distinction between ceremonially clean and unclean food, with the times and ways of fasting, and with the wearing of fringes or phylacteries on their garments. By this excessive attention to the letter, the inner spirit of the law was largely missed. But although the majority, probably, of the people, stood with the scribes and Pharisees in this external view of the law, there seems reason to believe that there were not a few who took a more spiritual view of religious obligations. It was among these that the real preparation for Christ's advent was to be found — "persons like the aged Simeon and Anna, who waited for the consolation of Israel, (Luke ii:25-38), untroubled by and perhaps indifferent to the mass of rabbinical laws."

A few concrete examples will make manifest how far this mistaken zeal for the law on the part of its more extreme though influential defenders — for not all by any means were thus rigid and strict — tended to lead the people astray from true righteousness, and how heavy the burden it imposed.

Sabbath Observance. One of the duties which was insisted upon with great stress, was Sabbath observance. The original prohibition of work on that day specified but few things. But the scribes, with great ingenuity, had developed these prohibitions into 39 subdivisions, by which a large number of things in particular were forbidden. Some of these were plowing, sowing, reaping, binding sheaves, kneading, baking, making or putting out a fire. Many of them were senseless in the extreme. Then each of these subdivisions was still further defined, that there might be no mistake as to their meaning. To gather a few ears of corn, for instance, on the Sabbath, was regarded by the scribes as reaping, hence was proscribed. The disciples were criticized for this very thing, (Matt. xii:1, 2, Mark ii:23, 24, Luke vi:7).

It was forbidden under the Mosaic law to carry a burden on the Sabbath from one tenement to another. Thereupon the scribes undertook to determine the exact bulk of what might be carried, and he was guilty of Sabbath desecration who carried out so much food as was equal in weight to a dry fig, or milk enough to swallow, or ink enough with which to write two letters, or reed enough with which to make a pen!

But these scrupulous guardians of the law went even farther. Not only did they declare what was forbidden on the Sabbath itself, which began on

Friday evening — these prohibitions were extended to every transaction which might possibly lead to a desecration of the day. A tailor, for instance, was not to go out at twilight on that evening with his needles, lest he might forget just the hour when the Sabbath — our Saturday began. Similar prohibitions and regulations were to be observed with reference to a score of other things equally infinitesimal and absurd. No risk must be run of any unpermissible work being done during the sacred hours of the holy day.

Yet some exceptions were permitted for the sake of humanity, or on account of some higher and more sacred command. All transactions necessary for the offering of sacrifices which the Temple ritual required, were allowed (Matt. xii:5), but, with a few exceptions of this kind, these Sabbath prohibitions were strictly insisted upon for those who would be truly religious. This accounts for the hostility of the Pharisees against Jesus because He healed on the Sabbath, (Matt. xii:9-13, Mark iii:1-5, Luke vi:6-10, xiii:10-17, 14:1-6, John v:1-10, ix:14-16).

Ceremonial Defilement and its Removal. Even deeper than the law of the Sabbath was the influence on the daily life of the manifold and far-reaching ordinances concerning ceremonial cleanliness and uncleanness. Not less than 12 treatises of the time dealt with the subject. With each of

the chief kinds of uncleanness the inquiry was raised and determined as to the circumstances under which the uncleanness was incurred, in what manner and to what extent it was transferred to others, what interests and objects were and were not capable of contracting uncleanness, and what means and regulations were required for its removal. A main question first of all was concerning the material of which the cooking utensils were composed, and next concerning the form, whether hollow or flat. In the case of hollow, earthen vessels, the air in them contracted and propagated ceremonial uncleanness, but not their outside. Purification of these vessels could result only from their being broken. But as a fraction only was still esteemed a vessel, and was capable of imparting defilement if it held only enough to anoint a little toe with, it is plain to see how thorough the breaking must be in order to effect its purification. Of wooden, leather, bone, and glass vessels, the flat ones were susceptible of defilement. The deep ones contracted defilement in their atmosphere. If they broke, they were clean.

As to the removal of defilement, the main question was as to what water was adapted to the different kinds of purifications — to the sprinkling of the hands, the washing of utensils, the bath of purification for persons. Several grades of water reservoirs were distinguished,— a pond, spring water,

collected water, running water. Directions concerning the washing and correct pouring on the hands were extremely minute. The question was also discussed as to the vessels from which such pouring should take place, who should do it, and how far the hands must be poured upon. Repeated allusions in the Gospels show with what zeal all these enactments were observed in the time of Christ, (Matt. xv:2, xxiii:25, 26, Mark vii:2-5, Luke xi:38, 39).

External Correctness of Action. The greatest importance was attached to this. Three mementos by which every Israelite was to be reminded of his duties toward God were in use. One of these consisted of tassels or fringes of a prescribed character, which were worn at the four corners of the upper garment, "that ye may look upon them and remember all the commandments of Jehovah to do them," (Num. xv:37). Another was an oblong box fixed to house and room doors above the right hand or post, on which was written, according to directions in Deut. vi:9, in 27 lines, the two paragraphs, Deut. vi:4-9, and xi:13-21. Then there were the phylacteries, from a Greek word meaning amulet or charm, which were supposed to possess the property of protecting the wearer against evil spirits and similar malign influences. This term was then, and by the Jews is still given to two small cases of leather, containing small rolls of parch-

ment, on which were written certain Old Testament passages (as Ex. xiii:1-10, xi:11-16, Deut. vi:4-9, xi:13-21), which were worn, one upon the forehead and the other upon the left arm. Our Lord, in His great anti-Pharisaic discourse, (Matt. xxiii), charges the scribes and Pharisees with ostentation in their religious duties, "for they make broad their phylacteries, and enlarge the borders (fringes) of their garments, and love the chief places at feasts."

Prayer and Fasting. Even in these many rules had to be observed. A certain prayer was to be recited twice a day in addition to the usual daily prayer, which was to be said morning, noon, and evening. The time of the prayer was exactly defined, and various regulations pertaining to the prayers themselves and the manner of offering them, were prescribed. It was a good custom which required the offering of thanksgiving in connection with partaking of food and drink. But here, also, regulations were made down to the pettiest details — pointing out the particular form to be used for the fruits of trees, what for wine, for the fruits of the ground, for bread, vegetables, vinegar, for unripe fallen fruit, for milk, cheese, eggs. Scholars contended as to when this and when that form was suitable. In such circumstances it is not strange that prayer was degraded into a mere external, mechanical performance, without significance, save

that of fulfilling a supposed duty. The service of prayer was even sunk so low as to become a manifestation of vanity and the cloak of inward impurity, (Matt. vi:15, xvii:7, Mark vii:6, xii:40, Luke xx:47). Vital piety was largely lost sight of, and of course there could be no real freedom of action.

The Pharisees were much given to fasting, and laid great stress on its value, but Christ declared that their fasting was of no avail if their hearts were not right, (Matt. ix:14, Mark ii:18, Luke v:33). Generally they did their fasting in a most public manner, "to be seen of men," thus to make a show of pious zeal religiously, which of course subjected them to most scathing rebukes on the part of Christ, (Matt. xxiii:5 and ff).

These facts, selected from many, will give some idea of the state of things religiously — the lifeless ceremonialism, the frivolous, meaningless requirements of the Law as then interpreted — which prevailed among many of the more punctilious yet influential elements of the people at the time of Christ. It tended to paralyze the religious life and to smother inward piety. It laid burdens upon the people which it was simply impossible for them to bear, (Matt. xxiii:4, Luke xi:46). But as a result of it, many were led to long for some way of deliverance, or at least were prepared to appreciate the glad tidings which Christ announced,

which did away with these exacting requirements, and made the great inner and comprehensive principle or law of love — love to God and love to man — the one supreme law for every one.

Jesus, of course, had no sympathy with these extreme views and practices, and more than once told the scribes and Pharisees that by their endless and fanciful interpretations and applications of the law, they were destroying its real purpose. As a matter of fact, their "traditions" were no part of the law proper, and had no binding force.

Christ's Teachings. Not only did Christ criticize and condemn these extra and exacting requirements, He set forth also the positive truth on many of these subjects. In this way He brought out and illustrated the real spirit of the religion which He sought to promulgate. In regard to the many costly sacrifices and offerings which prevailed in connection with the Temple worship, Jesus saw no special value in them. The most acceptable offerings which could be made were inward, the sacrifices of a broken and a contrite heart, as had long before been declared, (Ps. li:17). To Christ, the Temple was a house of prayer, rather than a place for the slaughter of beasts, (Matt. xxi:13, Mark xi:17). He felt so outraged by the traffic which was carried on there, that He called it a "house of merchandise and a den of thieves," (John ii:16).

In the matter of eating and the prohibition of

certain kinds of food as unclean — on the strict observance of which the Jews prided themselves — they must have been greatly shocked at Christ's saying that a man was not defiled by that which entered into his mouth, but rather by what came out of it — not by what he ate, but by what he said and did, (Matt. xv:10-20). As to their strict Sabbath observance, He must have greatly disturbed their conceit and offended many by declaring that the law expressly provided for acts of mercy, even on that day, (Luke xiii:15); that even the regulations of the sanctuary might be set aside in case of necessity, (Mark ii:25,26); that the Sabbath was made for man, to be a servant to help him to rest, rather than that man was made for the Sabbath, the Sabbath to be his exacting master (Mark ii:27); and finally, that He, Christ, was Himself greater than the Sabbath, and was not to be bound by mere rules in regard to it, (Matt. xii:8, Luke vi:5).

The possibility of evading filial obligations through some technicality of scribal origin, was severely condemned. The duty to care for dependent parents was clear, the dictates of the commonest gratitude and justice, and yet by the process of dedicating one's possessions to God — pronouncing the word "Corban" (meaning dedication) over them — they might still keep their possessions. This, declared Jesus, set at naught the plain com-

mandment of God to honor one's parents, (Matt. xv:1-9, Mark vii:9-13).

So in regard to the binding character of certain forms of oaths—their practice in regard to this was denounced in the severest terms. If a man swore by the Temple, for instance, he was not obliged to keep his oath, but if by the gold of its adornment, he was bound by it. The oath had no value if one swore by the altar, but it was sacred if taken upon the offering. Such was the casuistry by which the scribes settled questions. Christ declared that the only safe way was to discard the use of oaths altogether, (Matt. v:33-37).

In truth, every act was judged by Christ by the *motive* which prompted it. Only in this way could its moral quality be determined. Anything prompted merely by a desire for the praises of men, was of no value whatever in God's sight. This was true whether one prayed in public in order to be seen of men and to receive credit for his piety, or give alms or feasted. There was no merit whatever in conduct prompted by such motives. A tree could be known only by its fruits, (Mark vii:15), and Judaism as it then existed, judged by this standard, was worthless. The time for its overthrow had come. Already the axe of destruction was laid at its roots, (Matt. iii:10, Luke xx:31). So much was made of non-essentials of conduct, that the greater and graver things pertaining to it

were frequently entirely ignored, (Matt. xxiii:23, 24). Christ went so far in His condemnation of those who were responsible for this state of things, or for continuing it, as to accuse them of making clean the outside of the cup and platter, and of being entirely neglectful of that which is within. They were like whited sepulchers — outwardly beautiful, but within full of dead men's bones and all uncleanness, (Matt. xxiii:27, 28; Luke i:44).

It is not strange that Jesus should have brought Himself into disfavor by such strictures upon the practices of the times, and such attacks upon the current "traditions," but there seemed to be no other way. The situation was certainly one which called urgently for a new order of things and a more spiritual religion, and this Christ gave to men in His gospel, whose spirit and whose principles were more and more seen, as they were apprehended, to go to the foundation of things and to revolutionize them.

Messianic Expectations. A peculiarity of Jewish thought and life was the confident expectation of a better future. The Old Testament religion was prophetic in its very nature. The golden age, to the Jewish people, was in the future. Formed under the influence of their fundamental beliefs and their experiences — especially their misfortunes — this expectation became so rooted and grounded in

their consciousness that not even in their darkest hours did it suffer eclipse. The nation was to be purified from all bad elements, to be ruled in righteousness, its enemies to be destroyed or forced to acknowledge its sway, and a state of unclouded prosperity to dawn. Ultimately it was to become a universal empire, God Himself supreme in it, although immediately governed by an ideal king in direct descent from David, who should be God's true representative on earth. Through this king all God's promises would be made real to His people.

This picture of the Messianic era and the Messianic king, underwent various alterations in the thought of the people during different periods. In the time of Christ numerous features had become incorporated in it for which there was no adequate Scriptural warrant, and different views of it were entertained by different groups of men. It is difficult accurately to reproduce this expectation in all its variations and details as it then existed, yet all agreed that the coming kingdom was to be made up of Jews and their proselytes.

A prominent thought with many, perhaps most, in Christ's time, was that with the coming of the Messiah, there was to be deliverance from the yoke of bondage to the Roman power under which the nation was then groaning. Their conception was thus of a political rather than a spiritual Messiah.

Furthermore, He was to establish His kingdom in a time of general stress and calamity: nature herself was to bear witness to it: there would be many miraculous manifestations. Again, Jerusalem would be renovated as the seat of the new kingdom. The Jews of the Dispersion would return, the righteous dead would be raised, and a time of peace and plenty, of joy and holiness, would be ushered in. Then "this age" would end, and the "age to come" would begin.

There is no trace of any expectation of a *suffering* Messiah. The Old Testament passages bearing upon this, seem strangely to have been dropped out of mind. This suffering aspect of the life and character of the expected One — so at variance with the common thought — was one of the chief stumbling blocks to many of the Jews to the acceptance of Jesus as the Messiah for whom they were looking. The popular thought, indeed, in regard to the Messiah — save in the case of the Sadducees, who appear not to have shared in the Messianic hopes of the people — seemed to fasten upon such poetic imagery of the Old Testament concerning Him, as fell in with their spirit and temper at the time. These representations were construed as a literal description of Him and His characteristics. Everything not in harmony with such views was passed by. Even those who longed for a spiritual deliv-

er from the power of sin, could not divest themselves entirely of the idea that the Messiah was literally to sit on the throne of David. John the Baptist even, as he languished in prison, seemed to be perplexed by the fact that Jesus took a course so entirely at variance with the popular expectation, which manifestly he himself in a measure shared. It was this, no doubt, which led him to send his disciples to inquire specially of Jesus as to whether He was really the one to come, or whether they should look for someone else, (Matt. xi:3, Luke xvii:19, 20).

With such Messianic ideas prevailing, many of which were far wide of the mark, we can readily understand how difficult a task it must have been to disabuse people's minds of them, to stem the current of popular expectation, and to make prominent the idea of a purely spiritual kingdom. The great temptation, indeed, to which Jesus was subjected in the wilderness at the outset of His public ministry, was to yield to the material conceptions of the time. To have done this would have been utterly to fail in His high mission. Accordingly, instead of appealing to national pride and organizing a state, Christ sought to found a kingdom which should be purely spiritual in its character, with God supreme, and its membership made up of those who, as loyal children, should seek to do the

will of their heavenly Father, and be brethren to one another. It was this spiritual quality of His work and of the kingdom which He was proclaiming, which so scandalized the Jewish people. They were not looking for that kind of a Messiah or that kind of a kingdom. Yet the glad tidings which Christ announced of release from the exacting and burdensome enactments which were oppressing the people, was a welcome announcement to not a few, and it was the heralding of this same good news to men, and their reception into the kingdom on the simple condition of repentance from sin and of faith in Himself, which was to constitute the main work of the apostolic company and their successors.

When, after the resurrection and Pentecost, the disciples turned again to the Scriptures and read them in the light of these events and under the quickening of the Spirit, they saw, as they did not see before, how perfectly the Messianic ideal which was therein set forth had been fulfilled in the person and experience of their Lord and Master; that the Messiah, as He had Himself said, was to pass through suffering and death to His triumph; that stress was laid upon spiritual rather than material blessings; that He was to be the heavenly king of a spiritual rather than an earthly kingdom, and that in the final judgment of the world, He was to be the Judge.

V. APOSTOLIC TIMES.

In apostolic times the field widens from the narrow confines of Palestine and its immediate vicinity to the Roman Empire. It was the last command of Christ to His disciples that they should go forth after His departure — first tarrying in Jerusalem for the crowning preparation by an enduement of spiritual power — and declare the gospel throughout the world. In the Book of Acts we have a fragmentary record of the effort made to carry out this command. We see how the movement, confined at first and for a considerable period mainly to Jerusalem and Palestine, broadened out at length — increasing in momentum and power — until Christianity had gained a strong foothold in the leading cities of the Empire. We learn also how, after a severe and protracted struggle, Christianity succeeded in extricating itself from Judaism, with which, at first, it had been mistakenly identified, and by which it would have been merely a local religion. It finally emerged into the clear light of the one distinct, universal, and final religion for all mankind. Paul was its champion, and this freedom from its Judaic yoke may be regarded as his legacy to all succeeding generations. The epistles set forth more fully the spirit and principles of Christianity, and their application to many practical questions which from time to time arose.

Although after the times of Christ there were changes of administration and of the boundaries of some of the provinces, the political conditions remained much as they had been. Pilate, a few years after Christ's crucifixion, was deposed, owing to charges which compelled him to go to Rome for trial, and Marcellus was made procurator in his stead. Herod Agrippa I, grandson of Herod I, was appointed from Rome over what had been the tetrarchy of Philip, and later, all those parts of Judea and Samaria which had formerly belonged to his grandfather, were assigned to him. Under him a new impulse was given to Judaism, he himself observing its customs and ceremonies. He also attacked Christianity, killing James and arresting Peter, to please the Jews. He was fond of the amusements of the Græco-Roman world, and it was while engaged in games of this character at Cæsarea that he was stricken down by a mysterious and fatal disease, (Acts xii:19-23).

Herod II, son of Herod Agrippa I, was later appointed over the tetrarchy of Philip, to which portions of Galilee and Perea were added by Nero. It was before him that Paul was brought by Festus, (Acts xxv:14). He was a much weaker man than his father. His long reign, (A. D. 50 to A. D. 100), resulted in nothing in particular. He succeeded in winning considerable favor among the rabbis, (Acts xxvi:1-3, 27). Felix was procura-

tor when Paul was brought down from Jerusalem, a prisoner, to Cæsarea. He was neither a strong governor nor a good man. Porcius Festus, a man of good intentions, succeeded him, but he died soon after his appointment. Both Felix and Festus are of special interest from the fact that Paul, while a prisoner at Cæsarea, was brought before them on charges preferred by the authorities at Jerusalem, (Acts xxiv:1, 2, and xxv:7) — an outcome of the mob violence which burst upon him in the Temple courts and his rescue by the Roman garrison, (Acts xxii:24). Neither Felix nor Festus could find any ground, beyond that of the general hostility of the Jews, for keeping him in prison. When another trial was proposed, Paul appealed to Cæsar, (Acts xxv:11). This necessitated his being sent to Rome. Save in the case of Paul, the Christians do not seem to have particularly attracted the attention of the procurator.

The new faith received its first missionary impulse at Pentecost. Many Jews from different parts of the world were at that time present in Jerusalem, (Acts ii:5). Under the influence of Peter's sermon, a large number were converted, (Acts ii:41). When these returned to their homes, they naturally became propagators of the new faith. Their work helped to prepare the way for the labors of the apostles.

For a considerable time after Pentecost, the

apostles remained in Jerusalem, laboring constantly. When at length, as growing out of the death of Stephen, the first Christian martyr, (Acts viii:1), persecution arose there against the Christians, many of them were scattered abroad. These declared the glad tidings wherever they went, and thus the work extended throughout Judea and beyond. After Saul, the arch persecutor — who was afterward called Paul — was converted, (Acts ix:1-18), he preached for a time in Damascus, (verses 19, 20), then retired to Arabia for a season, (Gal. i:17). After this he visited Jerusalem, and shortly after went to his native Tarsus, (Acts ix:30), where he remained for several years, engaged, no doubt, in evangelistic work in the city and vicinity. Here he was sought out at length — “discovered” — by Barnabas, who had been sent from Jerusalem to take charge of the rapidly developing work at Antioch, (Acts xi:23), and was persuaded to return with him. Here in Antioch they labored together for more than a year with marked success, (verses 25, 26). Then a missionary impulse seemed to come upon the church, and Paul and Barnabas were sent forth on a mission to the Gentiles, (ch. xiii:2, 3).

Thus began a movement systematically to propagate Christianity in other lands, the facilities for such effort being peculiarly favorable by reason of the wide prevalence of the Greek tongue, and the

existence of Roman roads by which many of the most important centers were connected. In succession the gospel was preached and churches founded in Asia Minor, Macedonia, Greece. Although no record has been preserved, no doubt the apostolic company at the same time scattered in other directions, east and west, so that the last command of Christ was literally carried out. The large cities, as strategic points, were seized upon by Paul, and some of them became centers of extensive missionary operations. Some of these centers, in addition to Jerusalem and Antioch, were Ephesus, Philippi, Thessalonica, Berea, Athens, Corinth, Rome. The apostolic period was one of great activity and of wide-spread evangelism.

But the apostolic age did not close with the labors of Paul, although we have little further account of the progress of the movement. The ministry of John continued many years after Paul's death. His Gospel, written at Ephesus, where he seems to have taken up his residence, and which was then the center of eastern Christianity, wielded great influence. The author was confronted by certain speculative heresies concerning the person of Christ, and in this Gospel the avowed purpose is to prove that Christ is divine and the Son of God, (John xx:30, 31).

With the Johannine literature, which marks the highest development and claim of the new religion, the apostolic age closes.

CHAPTER VII

VISITING THE LANDS OF THE BIBLE

THE literature of the Holy Land and of all that pertains to it is now so extensive and so easily available that one may, without difficulty, inform himself thoroughly in regard to that interesting region. One may utilize the results of others' travels, study, and experience, in his efforts to render the Bible a real book to himself, and to awaken interest in its reading and study. It is not necessary to visit Bible lands in order to understand the Bible. Some of the best scholars and commentators have never done so.

Yet much as one may gain from reading and studying about the countries of the Bible, there is a vast increase of interest in the sacred Word and in the facts which it contains, when one comes one's self to visit the Holy Land and to look with one's own eyes upon the scenes of the various events which the Bible records. The impressions of such a visit will never be lost. Ever after as one reads the Scriptures and comes upon the names of places with which Scripture characters and events are associated, or references to customs which are dif-

ferent from our own, one will be able easily and clearly to reproduce the settings of the scenes and incidents to which allusions are made.

This sense of the reality of the Bible, of its narrations and references derived from observations in the Holy Land, is of indescribable advantage. It can hardly fail to render the Bible a new book to one, or to impart an added glow to one's description of Scripture events and scenes to others, and to awaken a corresponding interest in their minds. To the preacher, or Bible-class teacher, or to any student of the sacred Word, a visit to the Holy Land is peculiarly valuable. The uses which he may make of it for his own and others' profit, are manifold. Such a visit cannot fail to deepen his own interest in that Book which is, or should be, his main text-book. Not only will his own reading and study of it be more effective—he can render it much more attractive to others. It is not necessary to make constant and wearisome reference to “when I was abroad,” but the knowledge and impressions gained will have become so a part of himself, and will so enter into the warp and woof of his presentations of Scripture themes, as, without personal reference, to impart a sense of freshness and of authority to what he says. Special lectures upon the Holy Land are well in their place, if not overdone, but in all incidental allusions to it, there will be the added

interest which results from a knowledge that the speaker is bearing personal testimony to the reality and certainty of what is being described. Hence it would well repay every student of the Bible, if he could make a pilgrimage to the land of the Bible. His Bible work would ever after be the gainer. Especially would it be of value to every student of divinity if he could make such a trip leisurely, and with painstaking carefulness, as a post-graduate course before entering upon the active ministry, or as soon thereafter as possible. That he would thus be able more effectively to popularize the Bible in the minds of the people — which is one of the preëminent needs in congregations to-day — goes without saying.

The profound and eager interest with which a long anticipated and finally accomplished tour of the Holy Land is usually attended, is expressed in the following quotation from the writer's journal — written on entering the harbor of Beirut:

“It was with emotions peculiar and indescribable that my companions and I looked for the first time upon the Holy Land, that land of such remarkable and such momentous history. These emotions were much greater when we were actually landed and began our horseback journey through it. We had spent months in wandering over Europe, searching out its attractions for the stu-

dent and the pleasure-seeker. Every day had been filled to overflowing with enjoyment and with profit, the only drawback seeming to be the limit of personal endurance with so much to excite and to exhaust.

“We had lived over in thought the history of the various countries through which we had passed, and the great events which had rendered them historic. We had viewed the ruins of former magnificence in Rome and Athens, and in places of lesser note; had looked through galleries of art, miles in extent, with acres upon acres of pictures in the aggregate; had seen paintings and sculptures by the greatest masters of the past, until we were literally surfeited and exhausted. We had feasted our eyes upon the finest, the grandest and most beautiful scenery of all Europe — the landscapes of England and Scotland; the picturesque views along the Rhine, with its numerous castles, now mostly in ruins, perched upon bold and seemingly inaccessible cliffs; the quiet beauty of the placid Italian lakes; the glories of an Italian sunset over the Mediterranean. We had reveled in two weeks of delight among the wild and rugged scenery of Switzerland, with Alps on Alps, snow-capped the year round, rising far toward the heavens; had explored miles of glaciers, and sailed over the charming Swiss lakes nestling among the mountains. We had enjoyed many panoramic views

from elevated outlooks — over the famous battle-field of Waterloo; over cities without number from cathedral spires; over the beautiful Bay of Naples, and the surrounding country dotted with villages, from the summit of smoking Vesuvius. We had traveled by steamer and rail, by wagon and on horseback, over ocean and sea, and river, and mountain, and plain. All these experiences had been rich, suggestive, profitable in the extreme, often thrilling, and one might have felt abundantly repaid for the time, expense, and the no little hardship of such a trip, to have turned his face homeward without going beyond European limits.

“And yet, interesting, enjoyable, mentally enriching as all this was, it was but secondary in our thought, in the planning and execution of our tour abroad. For long years the desire and the purpose had been cherished of visiting the land of the Bible, where most of its transactions took place; where its prophets and heroes had lived; where Christ Himself, greater than all, had at length appeared among men, had wrought His mighty works, had lived that wonderful, sinless life, and had inaugurated a work which has been going on, with increasing momentum, ever since, until now it embraces the whole earth in the scope of its operations, as we believe it is ultimately destined to bring all mankind under its sway. It was a desire to behold this land, to look upon the

scenes which Christ had looked upon, to travel the paths which He had traveled, to live over in imagination — quickened by being upon the very spot where each incident had occurred — the events which the sacred Word records, which more than all else prompted the long and, in some respects, hazardous journey.

“Now that at length the time for the realization of these long-cherished hopes was drawing near, and as, early on that last morning of the slow and tedious voyage on the Mediterranean, we caught our first glimpse of the Lebanon Mountains — which extend for miles along the coast of ancient Syria — can it be wondered at that it was with emotions deep and heartfelt, that, straining our eyes through the twilight, we gazed long and eagerly on the land we were approaching? Upon deck all was quiet about us, and we sat there for some time, each occupied with his own reflections. At length my two companions and myself, all clergymen, began to talk over the history of this remarkable country, and to refresh our minds in regard to many things which it is important to remember in making a tour such as the one proposed.”

Most travelers, probably, are disappointed in this country, from the general desolation which now prevails, the squalor of the people, the lack of many grand and interesting ruins, or of magnificent

scenery such as that for instance, in Switzerland; but if forewarned, they are not likely to indulge in undue expectations. Palestine is by no means destitute of fine scenery, although many other lands are more attractive in this respect. It has some grand ruins to be sure, yet aside from the gigantic ruins of Baalbek in Syria, at the north of Palestine proper, and some old remains of the substructions of the temple at Jerusalem, there is little of special interest of this character to be found.

But the great and crowning attraction, after all, in a visit to the Holy Land, is in the things which are *not* seen. It is in the associations connected with what are called sacred localities. While many of the places are wonderfully interesting in themselves, it is the association of these places with Scripture characters and events, and especially with our Lord Himself, which constitutes the real charm of travel in that land.

Before reaching Palestine, the traveler will have already had a taste of the satisfaction to be experienced from beholding places and lands outside of it which are referred to in the Scriptures. It is a memorable experience, for instance, when, for the first time, he comes into the region of Paul's journeys, whose track he will afterward frequently cross; at Rome where he was imprisoned, wrote several of his most spiritual epistles, was tried, per-

haps finally executed; at the Puteoli mole, now mostly, though not altogether, in ruins, where he landed after the voyage from Malta on his way to Rome. He looked upon the same natural scenes which the traveler now beholds, the same beautiful bay of Naples, the same smoking Vesuvius, the same Pompeii, whose remains, after being long buried in volcanic ashes, are now quite largely uncovered. How vivid and interesting the 27th chapter of Acts, describing Paul's voyage and shipwreck becomes, as one sails over nearly the same course! During those terrible days of darkness and danger, the apostle was the most calm and hopeful of all on board, cheering them all, because of his sense of the presence of his unseen Lord. In sailing along the southern coast of Crete, the incidents connected with the earlier part of that voyage are brought vividly to mind. A day spent among the ruins of the once famous Ephesus, in which marble predominates, will prove to be of profoundest interest. The location of the open theater, which was scooped out of a hillside, and whose rising tiers of seats were capable of accommodating as many people as, or more than, our modern colosseums, is still plainly visible. The uproar set in motion by the silversmiths because Paul's teachings had begun seriously to effect their trade, is made very real as one reads the account in Acts xix afresh. Here, too, in Ephesus,

no doubt John the beloved disciple once lived, perhaps died. The island of Patmos to which he was banished, from which he was directed to send letters to the seven churches of Asia, and where he had the visions which resulted in the book of Revelation, is not far away.

Athens, too, that center of Greek culture in Paul's day, he visited, and his spirit was deeply exercised within him as he saw the city full of idols, (Acts xvii:15, 16). Here on the Areopagus, or Mars Hill, (verses 22 and ff), he delivered that memorable discourse on the fatherhood of God and the brotherhood of man, and here it will be a peculiar satisfaction to read again that address as reported in the Book of Acts. In visiting Tarsus, Paul's native place, "no mean city" in his time, (Acts xxi:39), although far from it now, one will look upon the same mountains to the northward which were familiar to him in his boyhood, and again later when for a season he preached in that region, perhaps making the home of his parents his headquarters. Here he was sought by Barnabas and prevailed upon to accompany him to Antioch, (Acts xi:25, 26).

But soul-stirring as the traveler finds it to be frequently to cross the track of the apostle, helping to awaken in his mind a new and abiding interest in him and his missionary journeys, and a sense of

the reality of the narrative of him which is given in the Book of Acts such as could never be gained otherwise, even more interesting and stirring will it be when at length he comes upon the track of our Lord Himself. When, for instance, in journeying through the country from north to south, he rides through the regions of Cæsarea Philippi — where Christ had made the memorable acknowledgment of His divine character, and reads anew the account of the incident in Matt. xvi:13-20,— it will be a season of thrilling interest to him. And during the entire journey through the Holy Land there will be similar and constant reminders of the New Testament narrative, and of Old Testament incidents as well. Some custom of the people which is observed, will illumine a passage not altogether clear before. Bedouin tents in the vicinity of Lake Huleh and on the Esdraelon plain, are still the faithful reproductions of the outward life of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. Many of these customs are novel enough to American eyes.

When Bishop J. H. Vincent was in Palestine, he says he “saw Abraham at his tent door; Rebecca veiling herself at the approach of the stranger; the long caravan of camels and Midianites on their way toward the south. I saw the roof,” he continues, “which might easily have been broken up; the grass on the housetops; the sparrow making

a nest for herself in the synagogue of Jerusalem. I saw the elders in the gates; David the shepherd, with his sheep on the hillside; the Jewish mother teaching Timothy the words of the old Book, in the old city on the hill. Verily it is the old land; it is the old life; it is the memorial presentation in concrete form of what the Book says was true there thousands of years ago."

It is one of the charms of eastern travel that the framework of the life, customs, manners, even of the dress and speech of the people, is still substantially the same as it was ages ago, and that one gains a sense of the reality and truthfulness of the Scripture narratives from what he sees, as he could in no other way. Perhaps he will some night pitch his tent near the waters of Merom, and there read over that portion of the Book of Joshua which relates to the conquest, which was practically completed by his victory over the combined kings of the north, (Josh. xi:7, 8), somewhere near this place — possibly at the very spot of his encampment. He will be fortunate if he can spend a Sunday at Tiberias on the western shore of the Sea of Galilee. The associations gathering about that body of water constitute a fitting theme for meditation on the day of rest. On its shores many of the most interesting events of Christ's ministry occurred. Here He taught multitudes thronging Him, sometimes speaking from a boat pushed out a

little from the shore, as the crowds pressed Him, (Matt. xiii:2). On these waters the disciples sailed; here Christ once calmed a storm by a word, (Luke viii:23, 24); and here, going to His imperiled disciples, He once walked on the water, (John vi:19). Here, too, on the shore, occurred one of the ten recorded appearances of Christ after the resurrection, (John xxi:1 and ff).

Going westward from Tiberias, the traveler will pass Mount Tabor, perhaps ride to its summit for a fine view over the plain of Esdraelon, long the gathering place of armies. Reaching Nazareth, which is located on a hillside, he will look upon the same natural scenery which, as a young man, Christ looked upon. Here He grew to manhood, and here, on one occasion, after He had entered upon His ministry, He preached in the synagogue. Crossing the Esdraelon plain to Mount Carmel and ascending it, the striking scene in which Elijah, single-handed, contended with the priests of Baal and routed them, will be reproduced in his imagination (I Kings xviii:20 and ff). Continuing his journey to the south or southeastward, he will come to the Hill of Samaria, once the seat of the capital of the northern kingdom, (I Kings xvi:23, 24); then to Shechem — located between mounts Ebal and Gerizim — where he will be reminded of the reading of the blessings and the cursings which occurred here, (Josh. viii:30-35). On

Gerizim, a little remnant of Samaritans still hold an annual festival, as when their fathers "worshiped in this mountain," (John iv:20). At Jacob's well, which is somewhat less than two miles to the eastward of Shechem, and whose genuineness is not disputed, he will naturally read the account of Christ's conversation on the water of life which was held here with the woman of Samaria, (John iv). Passing the sites of Bethel and Ai, which suggest various Scriptural incidents, he will descend into the Jericho plain. What a multitude of associations is brought to mind in riding over this plain, and thinking of Joshua's capture of the famous stronghold of the Canaanites here, (Josh. vi); or as he waters his horse in the Jordan! Joshua and his hosts had crossed this river on dry ground. Here John the Baptist baptized all who came to him, Jesus among them, (Matt. iii:5, 6, 13). The Dead Sea—the "sea of salt"—in whose waters it is impossible for one to sink, and around which general desolation prevails, will of course be visited.

The ascent to Jerusalem from the Jericho plain is a forenoon's ride. Christ passed over the same road on His last journey to the Holy City. At one place in the narrow and winding defile, the guide points out the ruins of an old khan or caravansary, into which he says, the good Samaritan took the

wounded and half-dead man whom he came upon, as he was journeying from Jerusalem down to Jericho, (Luke x:34). You remind him that that was not a real occurrence, only a parable, an illustration. "No matter," he says, "this is the inn to which he would have taken him if it had been a real occurrence," and you cannot dispute him.

Passing through Bethany on the eastern slope of Olivet, where Mary and Martha and Lazarus once lived, in whose house Jesus was a welcome guest, and where Lazarus was raised from the dead, the traveler comes to the summit of this hill or mountain, and gains his first view of the Holy City, which is located directly west of it. It is across the ravine of the Kidron, about three-fourths of a mile away, a city "beautiful in elevation" now, as it was in the time of the Psalmist. It was from Olivet that Jesus, beholding the city, wept over it, in view of its wickedness and guilt and its coming destruction, (Luke xix:41). It was from here also, a few weeks after His resurrection, that He ascended. Where the Mohammedan mosque with its great black dome is now so conspicuous, on the east side of Jerusalem, the temple of Solomon and later temples once stood. Here in the city — so abounding in Biblical associations from the time of David down — Christ taught, here He contended with the Jewish officials, here He was put to death, and from the

sepulcher in which He had been laid, He arose to the glory of His new life. Here the Pentecostal outpouring took place, (Acts ii), here Peter and John taught, (Acts iii), here Paul studied under Gamaliel, (Acts xxii:3), began his career as persecutor, (Acts viii:3), and on his return from his last missionary journey was arrested, (Acts xxi:33), and taken to Rome for trial before Nero, and here, or just outside of the city walls, Stephen was stoned to death, (Acts vii:59, 60), and thus became the first Christian martyr.

A few miles to the south of Jerusalem is Bethlehem, the city of David. It overlooks the little plain to the eastward where, very likely, Ruth gleaned, (Ruth ii:3, 4), where David tended his father's sheep, (I Sam. xvi:11), and where shepherds watched their flocks by night, (Luke ii:8). Here Christ was born in the manger, (Luke ii:7), here the wondering shepherds found Him, (Luke ii:15, 16), here the wise men came from the east to visit Him, bearing gifts, (Matt. ii:11). What more interesting place for the Christian to visit than this? From Joppa Jonah set sail on his memorable voyage, (Jonah i:1-4), and here Peter had the vision which enlarged his conception of the scope of the gospel, (Acts x:9 and ff).

In the region to the north of Palestine proper, there are numerous places of interest. There is

the little forest of cedars, a few hundred trees, covering perhaps a dozen acres, in the midst of a vast amphitheater of rock in the heart of the Lebanon mountains. It has been supposed that from this region Hiram, King of Tyre, procured the timber for Solomon's temple, (I Kings v:6-10). The half-dozen massive columns of the gigantic ruins of Baalbek which still remain standing, are visible for miles away. In regard to the tremendous ruins themselves, men never cease to wonder. How such immense blocks of stone were ever cut out, brought here, and elevated to their position in the foundation walls upon which the gorgeous temples of Baal were reared ages ago, is a mystery which has not yet been solved. A moonlight view of these ruins is a scene of glory never to be forgotten. Damascus suggests numerous Biblical events down to the time of Paul, whose conversion occurred not far away, (Acts ix:2 and ff). As one walks through the "street, called Straight," (Acts ix:11), (*called* so only, Mark Twain remarks) a picture of oriental city life, with its laden camels and donkeys, its many-colored costumes, representing nations and tribes without number, will be presented. Miserable, lean, cadaverous, yellow dogs, so characteristic of Mohammedan cities, are everywhere underfoot.

Wherever one goes, in fact, Scripture scenes and events are suggested. The Bible is made a real

book. From journeying through the country, one gains a fund of Scripture illustrations, and a knowledge of the land and its appearance, its geography and topography, such as the most diligent study of the writings of others alone, could never impart. The impressions thus gained never fade. Especially is this true of the grand mountain views of the Holy Land — from Olivet, from Ebal and Gerizim, from Carmel, from Tabor, crowning all from Hermon, which overlooks almost the whole of Palestine. Through that clear atmosphere everything is seen with the greatest distinctness. Far distant objects are brought near.

Some account of Hermon, which is the most conspicuous and beautiful mountain in all Palestine, and of the magnificent view from its summit, may afford a not inappropriate conclusion to this chapter.

The location of Hermon is clearly defined in Scripture. It is represented as being on the northeast border of Palestine, over against Lebanon, adjoining the plateau of Bashan. It stands at the southern end, and is the culminating point of the anti-Lebanon range — the eastern of the two parallel ranges of mountains at the north of Palestine. It rises majestically nearly two miles above the Mediterranean. Its form is quite regular, and its summit is almost always covered with snow. It is to be seen distinctly from all the northern and cen-

tral portion of the country, and from many places in the south, even from the southern shores of the Dead Sea, at least 150 miles distant. Indeed, so clear is the atmosphere that Hermon could be seen from all parts of the land were it not that the country is mountainous. It stands out distinctly in its solitary grandeur. This mountain was the great landmark of the Israelites. It was associated with their northern border almost as intimately as the sea was with the western. From whatever point they turned their eyes northward, Hermon was there terminating the view. From the plain along the coast, from the mountains of Samaria, from the valley of the Jordan, from the heights of Moab and Gilead, from the plateau of Bashan, that pale, blue, snow-capped crest formed the one feature of the northern horizon. It is interesting to reflect that all those persons with whose names we are familiar in Biblical history from the earliest times, once looked upon this mountain. Abraham saw it, Isaac also, and Jacob; Moses, doubtless, from Pisgah's lofty height; Joshua, Samuel, the long line of prophets; John the Baptist, Christ, and the apostles — Peter, Paul, and their associates.

Scattered about in different parts of this mountain, the ruins of old pagan temples, dedicated to the worship of Baal and other divinities, are to be found — some on its sides, others on its spurs, some on its very summit. Another fact of interest

is that the sources of the Jordan are to be traced to it and the hills about it. Mount Hermon is not a very rocky mountain, although some bold and majestic masses of rock appear here and there. The rock is a hard, gray limestone, and is full of fossils. The surface of the mountain, except near the top, is composed chiefly of smooth slopes, which in the springtime are clothed with verdure. Its summit is a plateau from which rise three low, rocky peaks, situated like the angles of a triangle and half a mile from each other. The two to the north are of equal height. The third is considerably lower than the other two.

Ascending the mountain on horseback from the northwest, a hard and difficult climb, especially the latter part, of several hours, the view which bursts upon the traveler, as he reaches the southern summit, is one which well repays the hard labor of the ascent. A magnificent panorama is spread out before him. He looks upon the land which has been the theater of the larger part of the most momentous transactions of Bible history, the land of the patriarchs, the prophets, the apostles, of the Lord Himself, the scene of many sanguinary conflicts, the land of mighty miracles, the home of the chosen people. After the first flush of bewildering sensations has passed, he will naturally begin a more deliberate survey of the scene — perhaps seating himself upon one of the blocks of stone

scattered around, the remnants, very likely, of some old temple of Baal.

The identification of the various points of interest is accomplished without difficulty. To the south, or rather a little to the southwest, lies Palestine, stretching away as far as the eye can reach. The distance from the Sea of Galilee, nestling among the surrounding hills—which is perhaps the first place to be identified with confidence—to the Mediterranean, which is visible to the southwest, is only 25 miles. The width of the country gradually increases, to its southern boundary, to about fifty or sixty miles. Beyond the Sea of Galilee, and stretching off indefinitely to the south, the deep depression of the Jordan—the most remarkable depression it is believed in the world—is distinctly seen. The river itself, which however, is not seen, is one continuous rapid from the Lake of Galilee to the Dead Sea. The northern half of the country is very distinct. Galilee is at our feet, and numerous Galilean towns scattered about upon the hilltops are distinguished. A view of little Lake Huleh, or the Waters of Merom, is obstructed by the spurs rising from the southern foot of the mountain. To the southwest fifty miles distant, Mount Tabor with its dark, rounded crest, is plainly seen. Although but 1,843 feet in height, it commands one of the most extensive prospects of the country, as it has also wit-

nessed some of the bloodiest battles in the history of the land, on the Esdraelon plain adjacent — from the time when Barak, captain of the Israelitish host, with the prophetess Deborah at his side, fought with Sisera, the captain of the host of Jabin, king of Canaan, more than 3,000 years ago, to the time when Napoleon, with 6,000 Frenchmen, routed and put to flight 27,000 Turks. Beyond Tabor rise the mountains of Samaria, with Ebal and Gerizim conspicuous. To the westward lies the bold and rugged ridge of Carmel, rising like a huge wall from the great plain at its foot. The tongue of land on which Tyre stands, is plainly outlined. Sidon is not visible, being hid from view by intervening mountains. The island of Cyprus, far out in the Mediterranean to the northwest, is sometimes discerned.

The view of the mountains at the north and northwest is very fine. Between the Lebanon and the anti-Lebanon ranges there is a long, narrow valley, called by the Romans, Cœlo-Syria. To the east is the plain of Damascus. The city itself appears like a small yellow field of irregular outline in the midst of a vast area of green. The oasis in which it lies is in full view, and also the surrounding desert of yellow sand, which stretches away in every direction until lost in the distance.

Off to the south and southeast is the land of Bashan, whose inhabitants were noted in Old Tes-

tament times for their great stature. It contains well-preserved ruins of cities, cut in the rock, which would rival in interest, were they more easily accessible, the ruins of Athens and Rome. Beyond, some seventy miles from Hermon, are the mountains of the Hauran, a volcanic region, over which are scattered the ruins of a vast number of ancient towns.

Is it not worth a toilsome ascent to have such a view as this? Does it not repay all the fatigues incurred to realize it? May not one well be pardoned for a little enthusiasm over it? Will it not add new interest to every reference the Bible makes to Hermon? Hear what Van De Velde, a traveler of note, says about it:—

“It is a magnificent view. I have traveled in no part of the world where I have seen such a variety of glorious mountain scenes within so narrow a compass. Not the luxurious Java, nor the richly-wooded Borneo, not the majestic Sumatra or Celebes, not the paradise-like Ceylon, far less the grand but naked mountains of South Africa, or the low, impenetrable woods of the West Indies, are to be compared with the southern projecting mountains of Lebanon. In yonder lands, all is green, or all is bare. An Indian landscape has something monotonous in its superabundance of wood or jungle, which one wishes in vain to see intermingled with rocky cliffs, or with towns or

villages. In the bare table-lands of Cape Colony the eye discovers nothing but rocky cliffs. It is not so, however, with the southern ranges of Lebanon. Here are woods and mountains, streams and villages, bold rocks, and green, cultivated fields, land and sea views. Here, in a word, you find all that the eye could desire to behold on earth. The whole of northern Canaan lies at our feet, the basin of the Sea of Tiberias, with the hills of Bara, far, far away, and all these hundreds of villages between the spot where we are and the seacoast. Half a day would not suffice for taking the angles of such an ocean of villages and towns, castles, hills, rivers and capes."

Upon this mountain top, or upon one of its southern spurs, many believe the Transfiguration took place, when "the fashion of His countenance was altered, and His raiment became white and dazzling," (Luke ix:28-36). It seemed good, at any rate, to be there, and to read afresh the sacred narrative of that marvelous event, and to try to picture it before the imagination. How vividly must the recollection of it have been impressed upon the minds of the disciples who were with Christ—Peter, James, and John—and what an inspiration it must have been to them ever after, especially in seasons of hardship, trial, and depression!

And as to them, so there come to us all, at times, some royal experiences of the mountain top, when we are lifted into special nearness to Christ, and He seems transfigured before our souls. The remembrance of these exalted hours, these glimpses into, and these foretastes of, the heavenly glory, should cheer and inspire us in our darker hours, when the view is circumscribed, when clouds lower above us, and our way is hedged about.

We conclude as we began, by emphasizing the value to the Bible student, whether preacher or layman, of a personal visit to the Lands of the Bible. As a result of such a visit, the sacred narrative will become more real to him than ever before, and he will be able to impress such a sense of its reality upon others as would not otherwise be possible. After having looked on the places where they occurred, incidents and events recorded in the Bible will be made to stand out before his mind with added freshness and interest. To study history amid the scenes in which it transpired, is to experience a constant surprise and delight. At every step the sacred story becomes more real and more true. Everywhere the landscape fits the narrative, and one is enabled to gather illustrations of the sacred writings from what one sees on every hand, above all from pictures of ancient times which are still preserved in the daily life of the people.

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